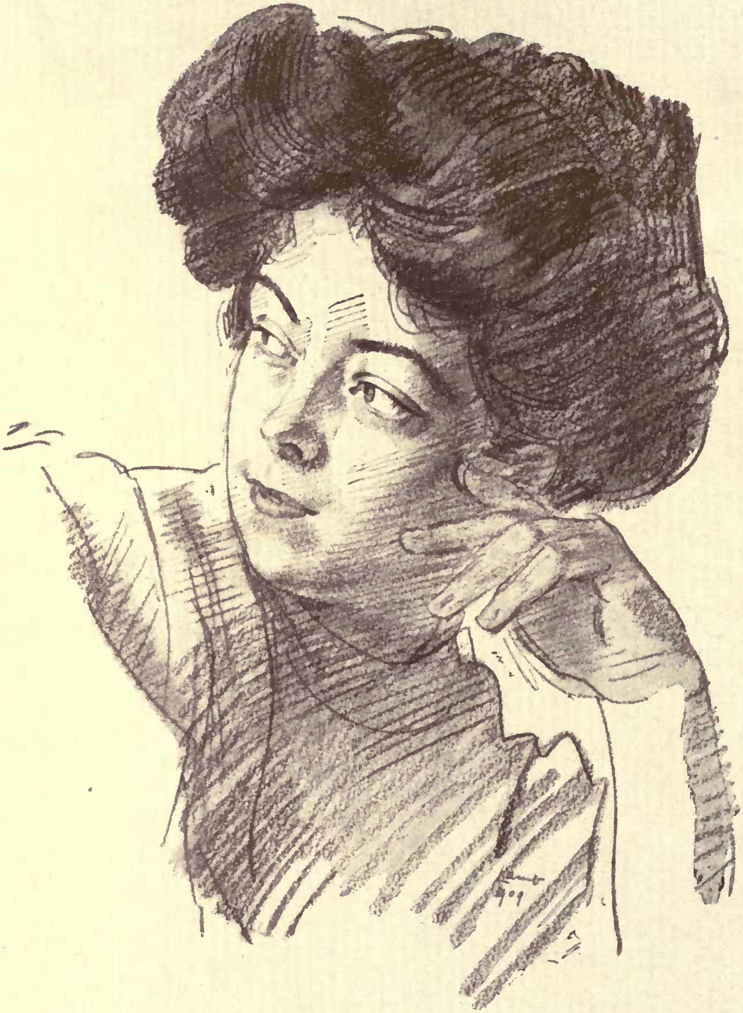
Memoirs of a Maid of Honour



THE HON. KATHARINE VILLIERS,

from a sketch by Henry Lamb.

MEMOIRS OF A MAID OF HONOUR

BY

THE HON. KATHARINE VILLIERS

ILLUSTRATED WITH PRIVATE PHOTOGRAPHS
TAKEN BY THE AUTHOR

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CHAPTER I

IN WAITING AT BUCKINGHAM PALACE

February, 1911.

IT seems only yesterday that I received the letter which informed me of my appointment to the Household of Her Majesty Queen Mary. How well I remember it! It was not, of course, unexpected, but, for all that, an entirely new life seemed from that day to begin for me.

There still remained some months before the coronation, and much for me to do before then. We hurried up to London and plunged at once into a vortex of clothes and photographers. In comparison with our practical outfits to-day, those clothes seem now too odd to be true! High collars, heavily whale-boned up to the ears, skirts trailing on the ground with heavy, ugly pleats, which the satin or petersham belt held securely into the waist in bunchy folds! Perched hats of outrageous shape, and ungainly muffs! However, to eyes that had seen no better, they seemed all that was appropriate and fashionable. I was, I remember, a little nonplussed (even in those days) by the length of my skirts, as the prevailing fashion had already lifted them an inch or two off the ground, so that occasionally in the " fast set " an ankle bone might be visible! However, in Court circles, ankle bones were not countenanced, and I remember my excited little fitters kneeling on the ground behind me arranging the heavy folds of black gabardine (an outrageous material) to the exact regulation Court length.

All this business was over at last, and the day inevitably approached when the ordeal of first entering the Royal Presence had to be faced. I remember that it came upon a Sunday. I was to attend morning service in the private Chapel of Buckingham Palace. Both Their Majesties were to be present, together with several members of the Royal Family. I can remember how my knees quaked as the smart brougham and pair of spanking chestnut horses swung up to our door. The beautiful gartered crest on the panel, the lifted hats of coachman and footman, the interested stares from passers-by, all combined to make me feel that this was indeed a momentous hour in my life. No Cinderella mounting her glass coach could have felt more thrilled than I! Trailing my imposing black skirt behind me (the Court was still in mourning for the late King), my head held stiffly in my upright bony collar, I mounted the step and settled myself in the interior of the dark little brougham, which smelt strongly of leather, and inside seemed no bigger than a hat-box! As the door shut and the magnificent footman jumped for the box, a man upon the pavement took off his hat (to the Royal Arms, I suppose), but I leant forward and smiled at him. I was happy and excited, and everyone seemed a friend.

I do not know why it is that horses from Royal stables seem to make more noise with their hoofs than less privileged quadrupeds. On this occasion it seemed to me that the very houses we passed must echo to the clop-cloppings of my handsome pair! It was not a long drive, but for me it was full of thrills. Everyone we passed, attracted by our smart appearance and by the noise we made, looked round at us with interested stares. As they recognised the Royal Arms and liveries, men swept off their hats, women craned forward, perambulators were stopped, and nursemaids pointed us out to their entirely indifferent charges! As each big cross-roads was reached the footman blew a peculiarly shrill blast on a whistle suspended round his neck by a cord. This attracted the attention of the police on point duty, who at once stopped the traffic upon both sides while we spanked across. At last, swinging round the corner of Constitution Hill, the big, grey Palace came into sight, and I realised that the great moment was at hand. As the carriage swept round in a semi-circle and entered the gates of the quadrangle, I took a deep breath and clasped my hands tightly in my absurd, flat muff. I noticed, through a veil of nervousness, the sentry at the gates, the cheery smile and salute of the policeman as we drew up with a gay clatter of hoofs at the side door to the right of the Grand Entrance. Here a truly gigantic figure in red stood in statuesque dignity at the top of the steps, while I made my descent from the carriage. To the uninitiated, these red figures who haunt the Palace, standing or sitting immobile during the long or short hours of their duty, might be mistaken for footmen. In reality they are rather above that grade. They were, I believe, instituted by the first George, who brought their great-grandfathers over from Germany, and in some cases they have served the Royal Family from father to son to the present day. They are known as the " Pages "—a quaint name, for some of them are quite old, with wonderful faces like carved ivory, their every movement stamped with the long years of their princely service. They wear their own livery or uniform, a crimson cloth coat, knee breeches, gold epaulettes, and on their collars at the back is stitched a big black, flat bow of ribbon—relic of the time when the ancestors of their service wore their hair in powdered queues. Wonderful old figures!

This particular one took me in charge at once, and escorted me in silent dignity round the seemingly endless turns of a crimson-carpeted corridor, and here, for the first time, I became conscious of that peculiar, faint fragrance which is present more or less in all the Royal houses in England. A very faint perfume, except when the actual presence of Their Majesties is expected, when the "Groom of the Chambers" may be seen using a large scent spray about the rooms, and the perfume becomes a great deal more accentuated. It is, I am told, an extremely refined and special brand of rose-water, distilled in Germany, and first brought into use in English palaces by the early Hanoverian Kings. It is now only used by the Royal Family. It lingers in my mind in connection with all my memories of Windsor, Buckingham Palace, and Balmoral, and the genial presence of Their Majesties.

As I walked sedately behind the Page on that far-off Sunday morning, traversing the corridor which runs on both sides of the inner quadrangle, I was conscious of long rows of windows on one side, and upon the other, the many lovely things that make for stateliness and dignity in a house. Mellow oil paintings in heavy frames, glass cabinets of rose-pink china (relics these, saved from the destruction of the French Revolution by George III's French chef), ormolu, marqueterie, cabinets of inlaid woods, damask chairs, a sense of richness, of stateliness and silence. The carpet very thick and soundless under my feet; and, permeating all things, the faint scent of roses—such was Buckingham Palace as I first knew it.

The crimson and white figure ahead of me turned at last into a vast, white-pillared hall, and from thence into a spacious room with a large bay window overlooking the garden, which is known as the Bow Room. Here, gathered round a cheerful coal fire, I found those who might vulgarly be termed my "stable companions." The lady-in-waiting (always a Peeress), the Woman of the Bedchamber (always the daughter of a Peer), and last, but by no means least, a very clever and cultivated personality, Princess Mary's French governess. They greeted me with great kindness, I remember, and drew me into their fire-lit circle, and there we waited, four sombre, rather absurd figures in black, the funny long tails of our dresses stretched limply on the floor behind us. We waited for what? I wondered in nervous anticipation! Would Their Majesties join us here? Should we go to another room and there be presented, or should we just file into the Chapel? Presently the Master of the Household joined us, and his genial presence immediately dispelled my tremors, as it was no doubt his vocation to do for the many hundreds he introduces into the Royal Presence. The Deputy Master strolled up, cheerful and charming too, the Groom and the Equerry came in arm-in-arm. These two are never far apart during their "waitings," as their duties so closely synchronise. With them the party seemed to be complete, and we moved off in a body, passing through four or five big Staterooms leading one out of the other, until, in a crimson-carpeted lobby, at the foot of a small stairway, we came suddenly upon the choir closely grouped round the serene old figure of Canon Edgar Sheppard, Sub-Dean of the Chapels Royal. How well I remember him! The purity of the aged face above the spotless lawn, the strength and reposefulness of the hands, which always seemed folded in prayer or raised in blessing, the astoundingly youthful blaze in the very black eyes, eager eyes, full of enthusiasm, awake to the larger life, and yet tempered by so fine and human an understanding. A serene and noble man! The Sub-Dean shook hands with those of us he knew, and I was, I remember, introduced, and saw the kindliness of his smile. We then proceeded up the little staircase, and passing through a doorway, found ourselves in a spacious balcony overlooking the Chapel. We took our places quietly at the further end, kneeling upon high, red damask hassocks with red damask cushions in front of us, upon which reposed enormous black and red prayer books and bibles, each stamped in gold with the Royal Arms. Having knelt for a moment and buried my face, I sank back into my large arm-chair and ventured to look round. Beneath us the Household servants had already arranged themselves in serried ranks on either side the little aisle—a black-garbed throng, broken here and there by the scarlet coats of the footmen and Pages (black was absolutely *de rigueur* in all great household staffs). The Master and Deputy Master, the Equerry and the Groom sat in chairs higher up at right angles to the Altar. All were already in their places. The Chapel itself, as it lay beneath us, was very simple, with little ornamentation, and not at all large. I remember a High Altar, many slender pillars, some fine oil paintings, an organ, and some regimental flags, the whole harmonious and dignified. Before the organ, men of the choir in spotless lawn were standing ready, their hymn books open. The organ murmured softly for a space, and presently the Children of the Chapel Royal came slowly in. Who can adequately describe the picture they made in their crimson tunics, embroidered with the golden Tudor rose, their boyish faces rising from their quaint Elizabethan collars? They slipped into their places, two rows of them, in front of their white-clad elder brethren, and the Sub-Dean came slowly in and took his place near the Altar. There was a short pause, the organ's murmur grew louder, and gently swelled into the cadence of the first hymn, as the King and Queen and their children entered the balcony.

"The King and Queen, with the Ladies and Gentlemen in Waiting, attended Divine Service in the private Chapel."

Behind the cold formality of these words lies a wealth of perfect and beautiful ritual. When the "Children" first opened their lips in that familar hymn, it seemed to me that Jacob's ladder had once more been let down from Heaven to Earth, so infinitely moving was that united harmony; controlled and trained so that it did not seem like many voices, but one perfect instrument of sound. To one accustomed, as I was, to the quite adequate choirs of the West End churches, running through their canticles and hymns in more or less hasty familiarity, this trained perfection was a thing apart, in a kingdom of its own. The basses and tenors formed a background of sonority, against which the lovely boyish voices of the Children wove frescoes and arabesques of heavenly sound. It swelled—it died away—it rose again in a "magnificat," and faded away to a very ghost! Finally, when the resonant voice of the Sub-Dean broke the silence in that most beautiful of blessings, to which the united choir gave its exquisite response in the three-fold Amen, it seemed as if the last word upon all things had been pronounced.

Alas, that this is never so! And for me, at least, the last word had not been said upon that memorable morning. My devotions ended, I rose from my knees, and felt rather than saw the exit of the Royal party through the door at the back of the balcony. I glanced up at the Lady-in-Waiting. She silently motioned me to follow her, and we, too, passed out, strictly in the order of our rank, to be confronted immediately (and at close quarters) with Their Majesties! The moment had indeed arrived, the lodestar of my many weeks of preparation. Often, during those expectant weeks, I had wondered just what my feelings would be when this top-most peak of my expectations should be reached. Truth, when she is confessed at all, is nearly always crude, and upon this occasion she forces me to admit that, as I passed through that doorway to be intimately confronted with the Sovereigns, the thoughts in my mind were entirely trivial ones, and centred round the probable deficiencies in my toilet! The lobby where we found ourselves was lighted by a large window in the roof, and a ruthless flood of winter sunshine descended upon our heads. We ladies, by some special dispensation, were bare-headed. However, the light shines, with equal impartiality, upon the good and the bad, we are told, and if on that morning it showed my deficiencies, it shone softly, too, on the lovely waves of the Queen's perfectly dressed head; it showed the sweet humour in her gracious smile, and lit with fire the magnificent jewel upon her breast. Those of us who have been privileged to see the Queen at close quarters in lovely garments of *eau de nil*, or rose-pink, or pearl-grey, never fail to be impressed; but I have personally always admired her most when in Court mourning. Dark colours accentuate, to an almost startling intensity, the extreme fairness and beauty of her skin, and there is, too, an intriguing hint as of splendour veiled in this intense fairness, in the soft and shadowy hair, and the magnificence of the jewels radiating from so sombre a background.

Upon this occasion she was, of course, in deepest black, and, notwithstanding my nervousness, I did not fail to notice the imposing statuesqueness of her figure. She spoke at once to the Lady-in-Waiting, and then, after a moment, turned slowly towards me, her eyes full of a half-shy and half-humorous question, to which I responded by touching my knee to the ground, and as she extended her black-gloved hand, I claimed for the first time my privilege as a member of her Household, by raising it to my lips. As I looked up from this act of homage she bent and kissed my cheek, and the presentation was complete.

There followed some courteous banalities, of which I have no recollection, and then I found myself presented to the King, whose genial atmosphere did much to banish my tremors. But something more than courteous geniality radiates from His Majesty, of which any who have been privileged to come into intimate contact with him must be aware. Although, in the incisive speech, the rather gruff voice, the automatic courtesies, there may be no hint of it, yet few who have spoken with him can fail, after a time, to be conscious of a curious sense of kindness, of insight, and of gentleness—a quick kindliness which bridges all gulfs and reaches the recipient through the medium of the direct, blue eyes (sailor's eyes) and the strong, firm grasp of the hand.

Presently the Royal children came up one by one to shake hands with "Mamma's new lady." Princess Mary, with roguish eyes and fascinating golden hair upon her shoulders, Prince Henry and Prince George, the latter the most delightful little schoolboy imaginable, with rose-pink cheeks and twinkling eyes, in the whitest of Eton collars. Each, as they smiled and shook hands, exhibited that intense but suppressed vitality common to all young things undergoing the restraint of training. Indeed, as I came to know them better, their sudden, and often amusing ebullitions of *joie de vivre* became a great joy to me. Even upon this occasion, their duties of hand-shaking over, Prince George plucked Prince Henry into the background, there to impart to him some comic news, over which they struggled valiantly to suppress their happy chuckles! It is always of interest to watch, in Royal children, the dawning consciousness of their position (which they invariably possess), as it struggles with the robust naturalness of their years. They will break off the most boisterous game to assume a quaint and solemn dignity when any stranger is presented to them.

It seemed to me that we stood in that lobby for years! However, at last, Their Majesties moved towards their exit, while we, with renewed curtsies, melted down the staircase, and the audience was over.

Thereafter, there was some talk, some pleasant lingering in scattered groups, some plots and plans made by the fire in the Bow Room, and then we passed slowly through the vast hall—the gigantic red seneschal upon the steps raised his black rod—our respective carriages clattered up under the portico, and we were driven away.

CHAPTER II

THE OPENING OF PARLIAMENT

BEFORE I was appointed Maid of Honour to the Queen, I lived with my family in the country, not very far from Sandringham, Their Majesties' much-loved Norfolk home. Every winter, in those long-ago days of King Edward's reign, we were accustomed to drive over to Sandringham for the private theatricals, and very pleasant those evenings were, for some of the best London companies would come down for these command performances, which always took place in the Ballroom, in front of King Edward, Queen Alexandra, the Royal house-party, and some of the county neighbours. I remember how much I always enjoyed our long drive home in the starlight by the sea, along that curious coast, with the sand-dunes running out into the water, the estuaries silvered by the moonlight, and haunted by the white sea-birds, along the marshes, green and purple with samphire and sea lavender, and the long dykes blue-grey with sea-thistles. In the midst of this Dutch-looking landscape, the scenery round Wolferton (Their Majesties' station) is like a bit of Scotland, dropped here by mistake. For miles around, the swelling, undulating country is purple with heather; and pines and larches and Scotch firs throw their shadows on the sandy soil.

One may drive for miles through deep, pine-scented woods, with broad alley-ways in every direction through which one catches glimpses of the steely-blue North Sea, to emerge again on to great sweeps of heather and gorse. Many of the Sandringham woods lie on either side of the public highway, and all who motor along that lovely coast road, between King's Lynn and Huntstanton, may enjoy them. As one approaches the Royal property, all is order and tidiness—the woodlands, however wild, are here pruned and cared for, and the broad roads running through the fine timber and undergrowth are beautifully kept. The dykes that guard the sea are planted thickly with Austrian pines, that form an excellent wind-break against the shrewd gales that in winter sweep across these lowlands straight from the Pole.

When my appointment as Maid of Honour to the new Queen had been gazetted, I came up to London with my family, and we took a flat.

On February 6th His Majesty opened the first Parliament of his reign, and I was bidden to lunch at Buckingham Palace, and to watch the Procession from there. A Royal carriage was sent to fetch me, and in due course I stepped into the great white hall of the Palace.

It was not altogether strange to me, for I had been here several times before. Upon my presentation to King Edward, when, as a nervous little débutante, tightly clutching a large bouquet of gardenias, I had passed the ordeal in the Ballroom; several times for the Court Balls and Garden Parties of the late reign, and only the preceding week I had attended Divine Service here in the private Chapel, for the first time as a member of Her Majesty's Household.

I looked round the immense rooms. Opposite me, up a few steps, was the Bow Room, with its pleasant semi-circle of French windows on to the garden. It seemed very cheerful, I thought, with its roaring fire, and the winter sunlight drifting in from the garden. Everywhere there were thick pile carpets of a deep wine red, and tall vases of flowers; and a great stillness, a sense of luxury and peace. On the garden side of Buckingham Palace it is difficult to remember that one is in a great roaring city. The grounds stretch out before the long windows, with lily-haunted lake, beds of flowers, great belts of trees, and winding paths.

From the ground-floor rooms there is no sight of a house, no sound of traffic, no motor-horns, nothing but the murmur of pigeons in the elms, the rustle of the trees, the sound (in summer) of the mowing machine. Into such a peace I stepped on that early spring morning of the Coronation year. But for all that, I was nervous. I knew only one or two members of the Household, and I had the very dimmest idea of procedure, or of what would be expected of me. I didn't even know whether I should be required to lunch with the Royal Family or not. I might have saved myself these tremors, for no such awe-inspiring ordeal awaited me.

Strolling across to the windows, I had my first view of the garden in winter. There were crocuses and snowdrops, and many hints of spring, but the great belts of trees, that protect the Palace so admirably from the turmoil of the streets, were still stencilled, black and leafless, against a winter sky. It seemed impossible to imagine all the colour and sunlit crowds of the Garden Party in July.

I had not very long to wait in a nervous solitude, for very soon the cheery members of the Household in Waiting began drifting in for lunch. My cousin, Lady Ampthill, joined me, so tall, so dignified, so admirably suited to these august surroundings, I thought.

We talked pleasantly by the fire, as one after the other the men strolled in, some in gorgeous uniforms, in preparation for the afternoon's ceremony, others in civilian clothes, wearing the frock-coats of London fashion. Presently, two men came in together, and I was immediately struck by their upright, soldierly good looks. Both were grey-headed, both tall and immaculately frock-coated. They were smiling, talking, greeting everyone with an easy charm of manner. And everyone seemed glad to see them. Lady Ampthill took me by the arm and led me up to be introduced, for the first time, to Sir Charles Frederick and Mr. Keppel (now Sir Derek Keppel), Master and Deputy-Master, in those days, of the King's Household. I was conscious of kindness and charm in both as I shook hands.

Sir Charles had been Master of the late King's Household for some years, and was a very perfect courtier, in the best sense of that word. No two men could have better filled their posts. By their tact and consideration they amalgamated the various and dissimilar elements in the Royal Household into a happy, united family, and no one felt their authority over it, but as a delightful and beneficent relationship. The memory of their kindliness and the help that they gave me in those early days remains with me still.

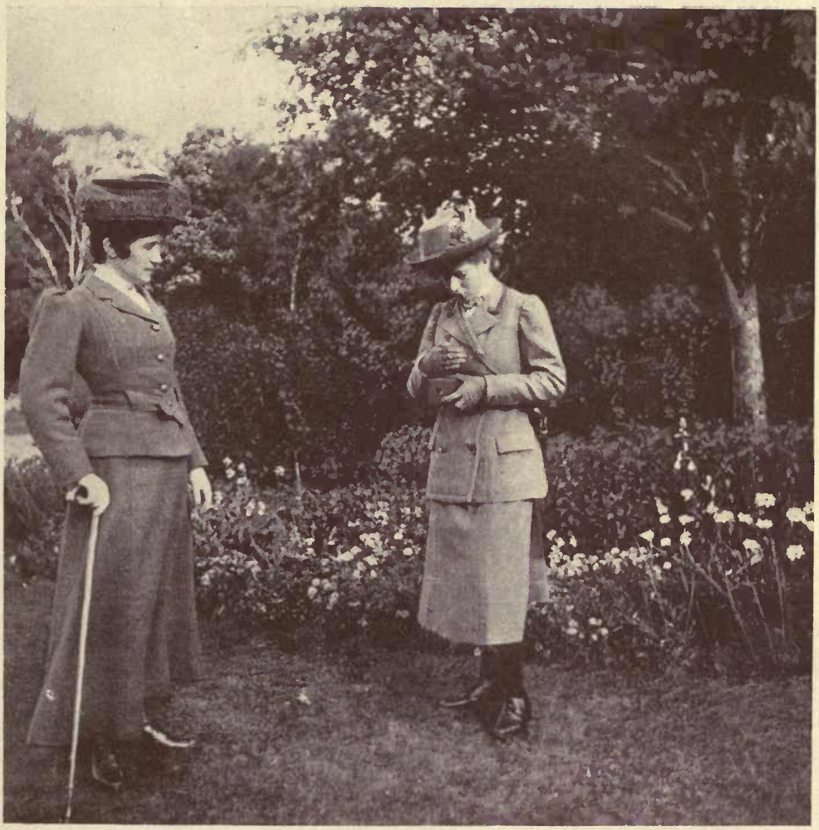
After much light-hearted and easy chatter we proceeded in to luncheon. There were generally two tables in the

Household dining-room. I sat next Colonel Lambton, as he was then (Brigadier-General Sir William Lambton), the late Lord Durham's brother. He had just been appointed Groom-in-Waiting to the King, and everything was as new to him as it was to me. I looked round. We ladies, I found, were considerably out-manned, as was usually the case, I discovered, at Household gatherings.

There were, as a rule, three or four ladies to seven or eight men present, sometimes more, for visitors from outside (and there were many) whose business brought them to the Palace would, more often than not, be asked to remain for a meal. In this way one was constantly meeting people in many different walks of life. On my other side I found Mr. Hansell, the young Princes' tutor, a pleasant and cultivated man. And then I noticed opposite, Mademoiselle Dussau, the clever French governess, who ruled Princess Mary's schoolroom for so many years, indeed until the Princess required no more schooling. She was (Mr. Hansell said) devoted to her young charge, and the Princess to her. Later on, when I was privileged to pay one or two visits to the large airy schoolroom at Buckingham Palace, I was delightfully conscious of the pleasant relationship that existed between governess and pupil.

Princess Mary's rooms, in those days, were in a corner wing of the Palace, to the left of the Grand Entrance. The schoolroom had several wide windows that looked on to the quadrangle and the Mall. No one can have any conception of the gaiety and charm of this view who has not actually looked out at it from the Palace.

Here is a whole busy world beneath one, of people and



MADEMOISELLE DURSAN. H.R.H. PRINCESS MARY.

Princess Mary was about twelve when I snapped her taking this snap-shot of her beloved governess, Mdlle. Dursan. She died soon after the Princess's marriage to Viscount Lascelles (now Lord Harewood).

traffic, life and movement, always circulating on the wide white pavements and roadway, where everything seems so spacious and clean. Little figures hurrying to and fro down the Mall or within the circle of bright flowerbeds, and on either side (and seeming to stretch for miles) the bushy foliage of St. James's and the Green Parks. In spring, when the trees are just in leaf, one looks across a sea of tender green, far away to the Houses of Parliament and Big Ben, outlined against a limpid sky.

The Palace is so set back in its quadrangle that hardly any noise reaches it, even upon this side, although motors and taxis, looking like toys, circle fussily round the fountains all day long. There can be very few outlooks more variable and delightful to watch at all times. At night it is fantastic, with the lamps like a string of jewels down the Mall, the illuminated roofs of the great hotels, Big Ben like a sombre, subsidiary moon over the trees, and Piccadilly running a gaudy coloured ribbon of lights across the Park.

In the year of which I write, the immense statue of Queen Victoria in front of the Palace was just completed, and the Emperor of Germany and his consort had been asked to come over and unveil it. Later on, this spring, I was to be present when the Kaiser performed this act in person. It was, I think, the last visit he paid to England—certainly the last he is ever likely to pay. . . .

The Household did not linger long over luncheon that day, as all were anxious to be ready in good time, before the arrival of the coach which was to take the Sovereigns to their first Parliament.

After leaving the dining-room, I hovered about, talking to those who were not to take part in the coming ceremony. Presently we were informed that the King and Queen were about to start, and I came into the Hall. It was already filled with a brilliant melée of uniforms.

The entrance doors were wide open. Upon the steps outside, Beefeaters, tall seneschals with black truncheons of office, Footmen in red and gold, Pages and Ushers were grouped in bright, fantastic crowds, and drawn close up to the steps was that miracle of gold—that fairy-tale-come-true—the State Coach.

This is simply too good to be true! I thought. If I am not dreaming—if I am really seeing this—then everything romantic and thrilling in life—everything I have adventured on nursery floors, pretended in happy schoolrooms, dreamt of in romantic twilights—is possible—and justified. For it seemed to me to be of deep import to those dear, secret fantasies that here, in this grey city of tubes and stock-brokers, of 'buses and business, this miracle of romance was possible. Outside, the Mall was black from end to end with prosaic crowds of everyday business people, waiting hour after hour to catch a glimpse of it.

Indeed, in that moment it seemed to me that Santa Claus and the fairies had come into their own. And I went slowly down the steps into the hall, filled with a happiness I should have found difficult to explain. For few of us can express in words those radiant moments in life when dreams become realities?

Nothing, certainly, could resemble Cinderella's coach more closely than this beautiful gold casket on its high wheels, in which the Sovereigns of this country drive to

Parliament and Coronations. It is one thing to catch sight of it for a moment after a weary wait in a crowd; quite another to look at it closely and at one's leisure, drawn up at the very door, with its six black horses pawing the stones, and postilions in red and gold sashes, white wigs and black velvet caps, controlling each pair with their short whips, for the splendid creatures were chafing a little at their heavy gold-embossed harness.

Two other State coaches were waiting for the suite. There was the constant clatter of horses' hoofs. Through the central archway, across the courtyard, one caught a glimpse of the Sovereigns' escort of Lifeguards which was to precede and follow the procession. They were drawn up in two glittering lines, on either side of the entrance, swords and breastplates shining in the sun. Such was the motionless regularity of the two lines that they looked like two plumed friezes of steel.

In the hall, all was bustle and activity. The Duchess of Devonshire (Mistress of the Robes), her small head scintillating with a crown of diamonds, had just arrived and now came slowly down the steps and joined the waiting group of ladies. Lord Granard, the Master of the Horse, stood with his plumed, cocked hat under his arm, his dark tunic resplendent with the gold lace of official Court dress. The Pages, picturesque little figures, with their scarlet coats, lace ruffles, and little white and gold swords, were being hurried into one of the coaches by a kindly usher.

A very few moments more—and the King and Queen appeared at the top of the steps near the Bow Room. Her Majesty, with a magnificent white ermine cloak thrown back upon her shoulders, with an all-round crown of diamonds glittering in her soft hair, the King wearing a military greatcoat over the splendour of his Field-Marshal's uniform, glittering with orders sharply cut across by the blue of the Garter ribbon. They came down among us, smiling, talking, breaking up the stiff, official atmosphere with their natural, charming informality ; the Queen, drawing on her gloves, laughing with the Duchess of Devonshire, drawing us all into the circle with her kindly smile. The King, talking to Colonel Lambton and greeting us too with some cheery, laughing remark.

Prince Henry and Prince George, both quite small boys, in immaculate Eton suits, were darting about round their parents, with wide-awake, amused little faces. Prince George came up to me now and whispered, " When Mamma and Papa have got into the coach, Harry and I are going up to a window on the first floor, where we shall see them come out and cross the quadrangle. You had better come too." Prince George evidently felt it incumbent upon him to look after " Mamma's new lady " on this great official occasion. Everyone stood to attention as the King and Queen came out upon the steps, and prepared to mount into the coach. This is by no means as easy a feat as it looks, for these great carriages are strung up on very loose, high springs, therefore the slightest weight on the steps brings the whole coach over as if it were about to come down on one's head. However, the heavy steps were let down, and two of the grooms in red and gold stood now, bare-headed, on either side to help Their Majesties to ascend into the great vehicle.

This was successfully accomplished, the door was shut, the grooms put on their velvet caps, and with a great clatter of hoofs the coach started on its long progress, servants in scarlet and gold walking by each door and at the heads of each pair of horses, and a company of solemn Beefeaters bringing up the rear. As they drove away Their Majesties waved to the two little Princes on the steps. Meanwhile, the other coaches waited motionless in the courtyard for the Lifeguards to wheel into place round the Sovereign's carriage, before they started. Prince George plucked me by the sleeve. "Come along," he said, and I followed obediently in the small potentate's wake. Up we scampered the red-carpeted stairs, and reached some windows on the first floor, directly overlooking the Grand Entrance. "Here we shall see beautifully," declared the little Prince, and pressed his rosy face against the glass. He was very much excited and interested in his parents' first progress to Parliament.

Prince Henry had followed his brother's lead, and now joined us. He was paler and less animated than the younger Prince, but a charming, intelligent little boy all the same. Now we could see the Lifeguards just below us, coming to the salute, and in another moment the great gold coach came lumbering out, right under the windows. It was entrancing to watch from our height the swinging movement of the escort as it wheeled in, some ahead and some behind it. Slowly the brilliant cortège crossed the quadrangle to the crash of the National Anthem from the Lifeguards' band, massed in a throng of gold to the right of the Entrance.

As far as we could see, the Mall and the rotunda were black with crowds, which broke out into a froth of white, waving handkerchiefs as the great carriage, like a precious jewel in the midst of its glittering escort, passed the gates. Prince George insisted on the window being opened, and we could then hear the roar of the cheering which swelled and died away like the roar of the sea.

It was thrilling to watch the black, expectant crowds far down the Mall straining, pressing, eager for a glimpse of this glittering thing which was advancing so slowly yet surely towards them, the mounted police trotting importantly ahead, the scarlet outriders, all the panoply and excitement of a Royal procession spread out like a map beneath us.

The little Princes were intensely interested, and jumped up and down, talking, ejaculating, gazing with round eyes at their Papa's and Mamma's magnificent progress down the Mall. Presently, as the Procession drew further away, their interest flagged, and they began to tell me about "Grandpapa" (King Edward). It seemed that the late King's Lying-in-State had been in the very place where we now stood. Both the Princes had been very much impressed by it, and now, with round eyes and solemn faces, they recounted their impressions.

The glorious mass of flowers . . . the tall candles . . . motionless sentries at each corner of the high bier . . . the throng of black-clad relatives . . . all the funeral pomp and circumstance of a great King's demise. It had awed their young minds, to whom the illustrious dead had been just "Grandpapa"—kind and amusing and jolly. How well I could see it all, how deeply interested I was to hear about it from these dear little boys—yet it seemed to me best to divert their thoughts from so solemn a subject; and so I pointed out the progress that the coach had already made down the crowded, cheering Mall. Indeed, it already looked like a toy thing, and the imposing escort seemed now no bigger than tin soldiers. And presently, as we watched, it very slowly turned the corner into the Horse Guards' Parade, and in a few moments more was lost to our view.

But in our imaginations we could still follow Their Majesties, for those who have ever seen it are not likely to forget the imposing ceremony of an English King and Queen's entry into Parliament. The sombre Chamber of the Lords in half-light, full of assembling Peers, Bishops and Law Lords, rustling into their places, weighted by their robes. Then, at a given moment, the Heralds of the Royal Procession, and preceded by the Earl Marshal and by all the great officers of State, by heralds, poursuivants and ushers, the Sovereigns enter Parliament hand in hand. And at the very moment of their entry the thunder of the great salute in the Park shakes the windows; every light goes up, and the dark House blazes into a very garden of colour. Closely massed red and violet mantles, scarlet uniforms, the gold and silver lace of the Court officials, the white wigs of the Law, the vivid heraldic colours of armorial tabards, the splendour of the Queen's jewels, and the Peeresses like a glittering frieze in the balcony; the scarlet of the Pages, orders scintillating on red tunics, golden epaulettes, and the flash of swords. Here are all the emblems and panoply that have flowered round the Throne out of the dim centuries behind it, and each smallest detail of which has historic significance. These are the many-coloured "flowers of the Crown." For, with the white wands of office, with golden lace, and the flutter of plumes upon bent heads, with the accolade, with the glitter of golden harness, with emblazoned arms, with the drawn sword, with the bent knee, has the signature of Kingship been written down the ages.

CHAPTER III

PREPARATIONS FOR THE FIRST COURT

May, 1911.

LOOKING through an old diary the other day, I came on a date a few days before Their Majesties' first Court, and the following entry: " Practised curtsies in ballroom with Queen and Royal children." That was all. The baldness of this statement can be accounted for by the fact that I had just started what is called " A Five Years' Diary." As all those who use these succinct little volumes must know, they have a distinct tendency to cramp one's style. With five years on one page, the wealth of one's impressions is apt to suffer eclipse. I had filled many books, locked and unlocked, with the wealth of mine, and it seemed to me that a period of poverty in this respect would not only be restful, but a very good discipline for the memory. Let it, I thought, fill in the gaps in my caligraphy for a bit. And now, years after, on reading this short sentence, I was delighted to find that there had been method in my madness, for instantly a whole scene came vividly into my mind. " Practised curtsies in the ballroom." I could see the great Ballroom at Buckingham Palace, in a twilight of half-curtained windows, and upon the dais, two empty Thrones, swathed in brown holland wrappings.

I saw two bright-faced little boys in trim Eton suits, and a girl of about fourteen with golden curls on her shoulders and vivid blue eyes that laughed. Queen Mary was there too, busy with many practical arrangements for the first Court, talking them over with the genial Master of the Household.

The Queen's object in visiting the scene of the coming Court, the first of the reign, was to satisfy herself as to the seating accommodation arranged for the Royal Family, the proper distance between the Thrones, and suchlike practical matters. The Royal children, always extremely high-spirited, made the occasion an excuse for much hilarity. Any interlude in the strict curriculum of their educational training was welcomed by them with enthusiasm, and made full use of.

I remember vividly upon this occasion, Prince George, the younger Prince, and if anything the more enterprising of the two, discovered a loose holland sheet, and at once insisted on arranging it as a Court train for his sister, Princess Mary. Thus burdened, she had to pass the two Thrones, making the appropriate curtsies to a chorus of suppressed mirth from the two little brothers. Her Majesty, accustomed to their high spirits, paid very little attention to these goings-on, but continued the discussion of forthcoming arrangements with Sir Charles Frederick. It had been settled that Princess Mary, with her governess, should be taken to a hidden gallery above the dais to watch the Court, for she was far too young in those days to take an active part in such a function. Presently, in the course of the discussion, the Queen mounted the dais and stood between the two thrones. Calling to me, she asked me to come in slowly from the door, just as the ladies would on the great night, for which this was, so to speak, an undress rehearsal, and to make the regulation curtsies to the two Thrones. Prince George instantly volunteered for this service, but was suppressed by his sister. In spite, however, of her protests, he would not allow matters to proceed until he had transferred the Princess's brown holland train to my shoulders, and with this ludicrous addition to my morning coat and skirt, I fulfilled the Queen's request, advancing slowly towards the thrones, dropping upon one knee before Her Majesty, then rising, walking a few paces, and dropping to the knee again.

" She does it too quickly," pronounced Prince George. " They could never get through as quickly as that with their long trains—and bouquets."

" Be quiet, George," said his sister. Her Majesty spoke in low tones to Sir Charles Frederick ; then turning to me with her charming, kindly smile, she asked if I would mind going through it once more. Mind ? I felt I would willingly go on doing it all morning. It was great fun, the children were so amusing, and I was glad and thrilled to think that I could be of any use at all to a gracious and kindly mistress.

So we continued, until matters had been arranged and decided to the Queen's satisfaction. Thus, all was made ready for the débutantes' great night. I was to be " in waiting " for it, and I was much looking forward to the very different point of view I should then obtain of a Court.

In spite of all that is written by sentimental journalists about the joy of the débutantes when they are introduced for the first time into the Royal Presence, I cannot but own that I have no very halcyon memories of the evening of my presentation. An eternal and rather chilly wait in the Mall, punctuated by violent jerks as our brougham gained an inch or two of ground; the discomfort of the unusual head-dress, and the many more hairpins that had been necessary. A dismal consciousness of very new shoes; a heated altercation with my mother as to the possibility of taking them off. The heavy, rather sickening scent of gardenias. Finally, the excitement of the arrival, gradually damped down by the length and discomfort of another long wait. Hot rooms. Growing astonishment that there could be quite so many women in the world! Despair at watching my bouquet of gardenias slowly developing brown edges. Anxiety, fright, as my train was finally taken from me and spread out behind me by skilful hands. A blaze of tremendous light. Horror at the sound of my own name. A smile from a far away high Throne—and then *relief* . . . . It was over . . . Congratulations from friends. Much-needed sustenance at sumptuous buffets. Hysterical laughter at expense of male relative in his first Court suit. A fierce, brisk fight in the cloak-room. Another long wait for the carriage. And so to the end of a nerve-shattering evening.

This time, I thought, it would be different. How different I had not the foggiest idea, but I was full of cheerful anticipation. Dress, feathers, and veil were all ready. There remained nothing further to be done.

So arrived a spring evening in May, and twilight in a prosaic London street. Yet, even here, a glad message had come from the smiling, happy country, for surely I remember a flower-girl with a basket full of purple lilac branches at the corner.

In our bright flat, high up above the street, every light was already turned on. I stepped back and surveyed myself critically in the long glass. Now, did I look like a bleached hearse-horse—or a Court lady? The smiling Bond Street coiffeur, rubbing his hands together with satisfaction, assured me that I was quite a correct Court lady. He had to say this to justify himself, for it was he who had just planted those absurd white feathers at the back of my head. They just topped his marcel waves, like the spume thrown up by Atlantic rollers. The thin silky tulle fell like a mist behind my sparsely covered shoulders.

The family assembled to criticise, for surely that is what families assemble for? " Are you sure your train should be as short and light as that? " Yes, that is now settled. The Queen's ladies are to wear dummy Court trains, that is to say, pieces of stuff just long enough to be thrown gracefully over an arm and to look like a full length Court train. They are not to be put down at all. In this way, space and time will be economised, for a lady with a Court train of regulation length is about as long and as cumbersome as a railway carriage, and if all the ladies-in-waiting had worn them, it would have taken half the evening to get the Court settled in the Ballroom before the mass of presentations began. For upon the poor Lord Chamberlain's mind weighs, almost like a nightmare, the rooms and rooms of white débutantes all waiting breathlessly to enter the Throne Room, with lovely bouquets that will fade; with anxious mammas who will wilt; with rather bored papas, chafing in their new Court suits with unfamiliar swords. It was essential that the Royal Procession should get into their places as quickly as possible, for the presentations to begin. These are the kind of problems that must be settled and solved by the Lord Chamberlain, and that make these evenings of the Courts arduous work for his Department. For it is no light responsibility to pilot hundreds of rather nervous women with their long trains and their bouquets smoothly and without a hitch through the crowded Ballroom.

I stepped back from the glass now, and gathered the long soft tail of lace on to my arm. It looked exactly like an ordinary length Court train, and yet was as light as a feather to carry. I silently blessed the Lord Chamberlain.

"Now," I said, "is there any sign of the carriage?" My maid looked out. "Oh," she said, and breathed a long sigh. We all gathered at the windows to see what had caused such inarticulate emotion. And there, coming down our prosaic street in the half-light, was a chariot of romance—a fairy-tale coach—a painted fairy-godmother's pumpkin carriage! Swung up on high springs, with great red wheels, and painted panels, a rubicund coachman in a white wig, controlling from a fringed hammercloth two enormous black horses in gold-embossed harness. A couple of footmen in scarlet with huge, two-cornered beaver hats, clinging to perilous perches at the back. "It can't—it can't be for me. . . . I can't get into that—all alone." I gasped. But on it came, pulling up at our twentieth-century door with a great clatter of hoofs, a rumble of wheels, and a jingle of harness. The two footmen sprang to the ground, one remaining by the carriage and the other, immense in his buccaneering beaver hat and white wig, advancing upon our speechless and astonished hall porter, who was surely unaccustomed to connect such grandeur with anything short of the Lord Mayor of London. "'E doesn't live 'ere," I could imagine him saying!

"Maid of Honour's coach stops the way!" I must really be going. I hastily pinned my diamond badge of office to my shoulder, whilst my maid rang for the lift. It was some moments before it arrived, and I can only think that the porter was so much taken aback by his magnificent interlocutor that he had temporarily forgotten how to use it. However, he showed admirable self-restraint and made no remark as we descended.

On the pavement a small and select crowd had already gathered. Several rather grubby little boys were examining the footmen with grave impersonal minuteness, an itinerant bicyclist had propped his machine by the curb and seemed to be about to swallow the coach, so wide open was his foolish mouth; and several ladies of uncertain age were undoubtedly going to be late for their suppers. The servants touched their great beavers as I appeared with my nodding white plumes in the dusk. "'Ow," said someone in the crowd, "she's goin' to a drorin' room."

I looked up at the coach. It was far bigger than I had expected it to be from our glimpse at the window. The two cumbersome steps were let down. The doorway seemed very small and very high up, and inside it looked like a dark little cavern. I had never in my life ridden in a State coach before. I was alone; the ordeal of a long, strange evening ahead of me, in unfamiliar surroundings. . . . A very old fourwheeler was passing at the moment, the type known to an earlier generation as a "growler." I glanced at it longingly. It symbolised to me, at that moment, all the placidity of everyday happenings, the un-alarming dead level of every day's "most quiet need"; something utterly at variance with these new and magnificent contacts that had latterly come into my life. I longed for the interior of that fourwheeler as a sailor for port in a storm. Why had I to ride in a State coach to a Palace? Why to be frightened by strange new solemnities? Lifting my head, I caught sight in that moment of a flushed belated sunset, and of the evening star. Why were there stars among the grey chimney-pots? Sunsets in a roaring industrial city? Why, in every life are there magic moments, when our habitual vibrations must be strung to a higher pitch? Perhaps it is never altogether comfortable to harness a wagon to a star, but isn't it worth while?

The flower-seller from the corner had joined my little curious crowd. I glanced at her common, ugly face, and then at her last lovely lilac branch. "Yes," I thought, and with that placed my white satin shoe on the first step of the coach. Instantly, the whole vehicle swayed over towards me, as if it were going to topple over. I hesitated. "It's alright, miss," murmured the footman reassuringly, "it'll right itself when you get in."

With this encouragement I plunged forward and up another step. There was a great swaying motion, and I was precipitated by it into the dark little interior. Here I felt rather than saw a low velvet seat, and sank down upon it as best I could, only praying that my hasty ingress had not broken one of my absurd white feathers. The door was shut on me, the servants leapt for their perilous perches, the coachman tightened his heavy reins, and with a swaying, a rumbling, and a jingling the great vehicle got into motion. Under the eyes of my small but thrilled audience I was driven away into the twilight streets of London.

How wonderful that hour, when the lamps look like jewels in a grey, velvet dusk, and the houses brood darkly above just lighted thoroughfares. Bright flower shops, vivid in the half-dark, illuminated clocks hanging out above a grey strip of street, theatre signs ; motors like black beetles, motors like fire-flies, gaudy hospitable 'buses, all the illuminated fanfare of the streets, flaring, bursting fitfully up, flowering in the dusk, into that lovely, blazing, many-hued catherine-wheel that is the night life of London.

After all, it was not unpleasant to be young—to be in London—to be in a State coach—and going to a Court for the first time, as part of that Court.

CHAPTER IV

THE FIRST COURT

May, 1911.

"MAID OF HONOUR'S coach stops the way!" It certainly did—as it drew up, with a great clatter, by the Grand Entrance of Buckingham Palace, with one small Maid of Honour inside it.

The two footmen, swinging at the back, leapt to the ground, the cumbersome steps were let down—and a tall seneschal in scarlet, with a high black hat, held up a kind of bear's paw in a white glove to help me to descend. I certainly think I managed to get out more gracefully than I got in—but that is no great boast! Quickly I ran up the steps and passed into the brilliantly lit, red carpeted hall of the Palace.

It was literally surging with débutantes, and seemed, to my dazed eyes, an agitated sea of white and black feathers. Girls with their mothers, and their brothers and their fathers, young married women with attendant husbands, elderly dowagers in antique jewellery. Tall girls like pale lilies; dumpy girls like little white hens; pretty ones and ugly ones, some rosy, some pale; all with fluttering plumes and veils, and their hands full of flowers.

The vast hall was scented with summer fragrances; the bouquets making heavenly splashes of colour among the pale plumed heads. *Les sylphides*, I called them. They clustered like flocks of white sea-birds round the pillars and on the steps, whilst the mammas, flushed and a little preoccupied with tight shoes and heavy tiaras, gathered in gossiping groups, and the fathers and brothers and husbands, many of them dragged up from the country, from playing golf and poking pigs, hovered about, feeling defiant or foolish, in uniform or Court suits of black velvet.

How sweet the girls were, I thought. Their young faces curious and pale above their flowers. I worked my way to the stairs through the ever-moving crowd, and as I reached and mounted them, leaving the surging hall behind me, I seemed suddenly to have entered a haven of peace, for there was no one but myself upon the broad staircase.

I climbed a little higher, then stopped to look back. What a sight! A glittering parterre of bejewelled ladies, every outline tremulous with feathers and fans, girls with great bouquets or hugging a few lilies as not so long ago they hugged their dolls. Blazes of almost every known uniform from Ghurkas to the Guards; foreign Attachés, Indian Ranees; the King's servants in red and gold, and a great many men in black velvet, with steel swords and buckles, moving like ravens through this exotic aviary.

Ah!—here at last was someone coming up the stairs. I recognised the genial Italian Ambassador and his wife. I greeted them and we moved up together, leaving the busy crowded hall behind us, for the stately, uncrowded spaces of the Picture Gallery. The silence here fell like balm upon the senses after the noise and confusion downstairs. The beautiful room stretched its long length under the sparkling sharp-set light of many chandeliers; the walls mellow with paintings, glowing richly in the high, clear radiance; low red sofas at intervals along the shimmering parquet floor.

Several diplomats and their wives, an Indian Prince and his lovely young sisters, and one or two Court functionaries and their families were strolling up and down, admiring the works of art; and by the doors into a circular anteroom a cluster of high officials of the Lord Chamberlain's Department in tunics of gold lace, carrying tall white wands of office were gathered, talking in low tones. The Lord Chamberlain himself was here, and greeted me with a kindly smile. Here I found one of the Queen's Ladies-in-Waiting, and the Duchess of Devonshire, soft-voiced, radiantly crowned, her lovely shimmering dress weighted with orders and badges. With gentle, kindly greeting she hailed me to her side, and we discussed such knotty problems as trains and feathers for some moments. The Duchess bears the great title of "Mistress of the Robes" at Court, but she is called something else too, by a name we all of us loved to use, not only for its historic significance, but because we felt it so aptly described this kind and illustrious lady. For, through the dim centuries behind us from Queen Elizabeth's time, and, if I am not mistaken, even before that, the English Queen's Mistress of the Robes has been known as "The Mother of the Maids of Honour," which has been shortened by long use into "Mother of the Maids." Not one of us but felt its peculiar appropriateness in this case.

Officials and diplomats were by now beginning to assemble in greater numbers. My sister Maid arrived, tall, composed and regal in white. We were instructed by the Vice-Chamberlain to stand together near the closed white doors, through which Their Majesties and the Royal Family would presently appear.

Meanwhile, the Ambassadors and their wives were passing slowly through on their way to the Ballroom.

Here was the Turkish Ambassador, in his red fez, wearing a dark coat covered with magnificent diamond orders. The Japanese Ambassador, Monsieur Cambon, Ambassador of France, serene and kindly, with pointed grey beard and courtly manners, for so many years French Ambassador to St. James's, that he finally achieved the distinction of being the doyen of the Diplomatic Corps. Then the Spaniards, the Marquese and Marquesa Merry del Val, she, a tiny, vivacious lady with wonderful jewels and clothes.

There was a growing feeling now of expectancy as the hour approached for the appearance of Their Majesties.

The Lord Chamberlain and his satellites were crowding into some kind of ceremonial formation. Two Chamberlains, resplendent in encrusted gold, with velvet knee-breeches and white silk stockings, with slender white sticks of office, stood together by the doors, while behind them, two by two, each official with a white stick, the ceremonial procession was forming—a procession whose duty it was to walk backwards before the Sovereigns through three long rooms into the Ballroom—by no means an easy feat!

In this instance, I cannot help recalling the rather ludicrous mishap which befell my uncle, the late Lord Lathom, many years ago, when Lord Chamberlain. In the exercise of his high office, he was conducting His late Majesty to some great Court function. At the last minute, some alteration in the number of steps on a dais had been made, and my uncle had either not been informed or had forgotten it. In any case, at the crucial moment, and as in full Court dress he was walking backwards, bowing over his white stick, the treacherous step tripped him, and he fell full length on the floor, before his startled but amused Royal master. For when it became mercifully apparent that the grand old man had suffered no injury, King Edward's sense of humour was aroused. His Majesty himself helped him to rise, and quickly reassured himself that he was not hurt before he gave way to the torrents of his good-natured mirth!

Now the last of the Ambassadors had passed through, with courtly, smiling gestures, and there was no one left in the anteroom but the members of the Court—Lords, Equerries and Grooms-in-Waiting, the great officers of State and the resplendent officials of the Lord Chamberlain's department. We ladies, clustered behind the Mistress of the Robes, waited to take our places in the procession.

The great moment had arrived. "Thank heaven, *we* don't have to walk backwards," I whispered to Miss Baring. The two Chamberlains seemed to wait some unseen signal. It came. The doors were opened, and the Sovereigns were disclosed standing hand in hand, motionless under the brilliant chandeliers, scarlet-clad Pages and the Royal Family at their back. The Chamberlains upon the threshold of the folding doors bowed deeply. There was a long moment of impressive silence.

Under the blazing lights, the Queen's superb diamonds scintillated frostily. Both Sovereigns wore the ribbon of the Garter, which crossed the King's Field-Marshal's uniform in a sharp streak of blue. Very wonderful, I thought, they looked, like a fairy-tale King and Queen, standing in regal immobility under the radiant lights. Slowly now they advanced, and slowly the Lord Chamberlain's procession retreated before them, walking backwards, bowing over their white sticks. In such order they entered the ante-room where we were all assembled. We curtsied to the ground.

Behind them walked the King's aunts, Princess Christian, and Princess Louise, Duchess of Argyll, both with clear-cut, imperious profiles, and imbued with that personal dignity which seems to be the heritage of all Queen Victoria's children. And then followed a tall, graceful figure, Princess Patricia of Connaught (now Lady Patricia Ramsay). In later years, I was to know this charming person well, but in those days she was to me just a gracious young royalty to whom I had not yet had the privilege of being presented. Beside her walked her brother, Prince Arthur, débonair, smiling, observant of everything. The Garter ribbon crossed his brilliant regimental tunic of the Scots Greys. Then two Battenberg Princes, and after them the Duchess of Devonshire stepped forward and took her place, followed by Lady Desborough and another of the Queen's ladies, and then by Miss Baring and myself.

Behind us, two by two, came Lords, Equerries and Grooms-in-Waiting. And so we advanced, and slowly crossed the three great drawing-rooms to the Ballroom, a quite narrow space having been cleared through the now crowded saloons for the passage of the procession. For the space was packed to the very walls with the crowds of ladies awaiting presentation and their attendant males.

We walked down a narrow pathway, with dense, feathered throngs on each side, and it was curious to look ahead and to watch feathered head after feathered head go down as the Royalties passed. The ladies stood shoulder to shoulder, and seemed to fall to the ground like oats before the sickle!

In the Ballroom tiers of people on raised seats were packed half way up the walls, their eyes on the two empty Thrones upon the dais. Opposite the Thrones were drawn up the brilliant ranks of the Honorary Corps of the Gentlemen-at-Arms and the Yeomen of the Guard, under their respective commanders.

As the first ushers, with their white sticks, entered the Ballroom backwards, there came a rumble of drums and brass from the hidden band, high up in the gallery. White plumes rose in every direction at the sound, and the vast concourse of people stood up in motionless expectation. As the Chamberlains, in their wonderful golden tunics, bowing over their white sticks, crossed the threshold backwards, the roll swelled into a deafening tempest of sound, which, as the Sovereigns finally entered, resolved itself with a crash into the National Anthem.

Every lady in the great room curtsied, everywhere there were rows and rows of youthful faces bending over vivid flowers, and a great quivering of feathers and fans.

As the last strains of the National Anthem died away, Their Majesties ascended the dais. In an impressive silence, the Royalties passed to their places on either side, where low seats for their accommodation had been placed, all, that is, except Prince Arthur, who stood close to the King to the right of the Throne during the entire ceremony.

Headed by the Duchess of Devonshire we ladies then passed, curtseying deeply to the Thrones, to take our places on the dais, on raised seats behind the Royalties.

Their Majesties stood to receive the Corps Diplomatique. Meanwhile, the Lord Chamberlain, standing on the steps to the right of the King, had already executed, with perfect smoothness, a remarkable piece of staff-work, whereby he had become the head of a long caterpillar of his ceremonial subordinates in their gold and blue uniforms. It stretched from him as far as the entrance doors, where the last official stood to receive the card of the lady about to enter. On it was inscribed her name and the names of any ladies she wished to present. Up flew this card, from hand to hand along the line, until it reached the Lord Chamberlain just at the moment when the lady drew opposite the Thrones. As she curtsied her name was called, followed by the names of the ladies for whom she was responsible—a very accomplished piece of staff-work, which worked without a hitch during the entire evening.

The Diplomats and their presentations took some time to pass, and there was an almost audible sigh of relief as the last one made her curtsey and the Sovereigns seated themselves upon the Thrones. Then we could all sit. The long, red benches were narrow and not very comfortable, but still, they were benches !

Those who had the privilege to the " entrée " now came filing in, and after them the mass of presentations began. One after the other, the ladies appeared and passed quite slowly, of necessity, for to each the moment was momentous and could not be hurried. Some looked flushed, some pale.

Some moved gracefully, and as they curtsied, were able to convey their homage, others were awkward and self-conscious and made no great impression.

But, at such a moment, it is cruel to criticise, for to make one's bow at Court is no light ordeal.

Yet, as hour after hour passed, as the slow procession wound its way before us, as the lights from the many chandeliers beat relentlessly upon our tormented foreheads, there is no doubt that we did become a little critical! After an hour, I glanced round the vast room. Ladies—ladies—ladies—with feathers and veils, their numbers, so far as one could see, in no way diminished by those who had already passed.

"We shall still be here for breakfast," I whispered. "What a pity we didn't bring rolls and a thermos." My sister Maid smiled.

"Ah, *she* did it well—how dignified and graceful she is!" So we whispered to each other.

At last came one who had undoubtedly produced a very bold interpretation of Court dress; in fact, only by the broadest stretch of imagination could it be called Court dress at all. Her veil was quite short and was heavily spangled with what appeared to be an entire firmament of gold and silver stars.

An enormous tiara was fixed firmly to her eyebrows, and from under it her eyes peered out, rather like a frightened rabbit's. She seemed uncertain both of what she was going to do, and why she had to do it. She gave her card up to the usher, as if she were relinquishing the last rope in a shipwreck, and clinging with both hands to a huge bunch of madonna lilies which had seen happier moments, she advanced a little uncertainly into the Presence. Poor lady! I have entirely forgotten (if I ever knew) who she was, but I have a grateful remembrance of her as a really bright interlude in a monotonous ceremony.

At last, the Ballroom began to grow emptier, the raised seats against the walls to show definite gaps. The ladies jostled each other less, there was more space. Then, quite suddenly, one noticed the last rows moving out and the stands becoming gradually deserted. Yet still the feathered procession went on, the pale plumed ranks moving—moving slowly past the Thrones.

Eventually the last lady left the Ballroom, to reappear at the door near the dais; the tail of the procession was in sight. Immovable sat the Sovereigns, smiling on the last ladies as graciously, as untiringly as they had smiled on the first, with that fine endurance, that unwearied patience that are the first principles of Royalty. The very last presentation was as carefully managed, as attentively received as the first. The last nervous lady obtained the same re-assurance, the same attention, the same gracious acknowledgment as her predecessors.

Not until she had finally disappeared, and the great room was at last emptied of everyone except the Court and the numerous officials, did Their Majesties so much as stir upon the Thrones. Then—only then—as the echoing roll of the drums and brass was again heard preluding the National Anthem, the Sovereigns stood up, and, hand in hand, once more slowly descended the dais, bowing to the Royal Family, who fell in immediately behind them. Preceded by the tireless officials, still walking backwards, we left the Ballroom in the same order, just as the last crashing chords of "God Save the King" died away into a blessed silence.

In silence we re-crossed the three saloons, the procession again moving like a reaping-machine among the feathered heads. Down they went upon either side. We accompanied the Royalties to the doors of the private apartments, which were closed after them by the Lord Chamberlain.

"I am *so* tired," I murmured to my companion.

"So am I, but come and have some supper before we drive home." We turned away to seek sustenance.

"Find me something or I shall die," I said. My sister Maid handed me a cress sandwich. I looked at her reproachfully, but took it, and I can remember now the bracing effect that simple little ditch-plant had on my exhausted faculties.

I threw off the torpor of fatigue, and looked round me. We were still among the Diplomats and Court officials, for none of the general public were allowed in these rooms. I supposed them to be consuming sandwiches downstairs.

There followed a pleasant hour. I found friends, strolled about the great rooms, looked at the pictures, and found myself at long last in the Entrance Hall. The tall seneschal by the doors caught sight of me putting on my cloak. Instantly he went out to the steps and called at the top of his voice, "Maid of Honour's coach!"

The courtyard was still full of cars and carriages. There were crowds of servants on the steps: linkmen, footmen—bustle and confusion in the dark. In a very few moments, with a great rumble on the stones, the coach swung up to the doors, footmen running beside it. Another shout: " Maid of Honour's coach stops the way ! " I gathered my cloak together and ran down the steps, and so was driven away into a darkness that already held a hint of dawn.

CHAPTER V

A STATE VISIT TO BUCKINGHAM PALACE (I)

May, 1911.

THE month of May. England emerging from a national mourning, awakening to all the bustling brilliance of a Coronation in June. To that small fraction of the General public, known as London Society, the demise of the Crown (except to those personally concerned) means little more than no Courts, a few black rags, and smaller parties. But to the great mass of people in the busy, strenuous world of business, to the luxury trades, to the hotels, shops and money markets, it is of far more serious import. For it presages a slump in trade, a stifling of social enterprise, a closing of purse-strings, and a consequent more or less serious financial loss to thousands of the dead King's subjects. And so, when the necessary period of mourning is lifted, dressmakers breathe long sighs of relief, hotel managers embark again upon gala nights, money markets become more propitious, and everyone looks round again to see what he can spend.

The Coronation season of Nineteen hundred and eleven held out every promise of brilliance, and when it was rumoured that a State visit of a week from the German Emperor and Empress was to take place in May, shops and places of entertainment burst again into hectic life.

Among the quartette of new Maids of Honour (to which I had the privilege to belong), there was no little speculation as to which of us would be chosen for the week of the State visit. We always hunted, so to speak, in couples, two on and two off. The visit, of course, would mean a very strenuous time for us, and long hours of standing at the Palace, but we were all of us more than willing to face this, for the sake of the excitement and interest it would certainly entail. For a State visit to Buckingham Palace of reigning Sovereigns, especially if it takes place in the middle of the London season, means the compression into a few hectic days and nights of intensive Royal entertaining that is usually spread over many weeks.

How interesting it would be, we thought, to see at close quarters this rather showy, pinchbeck, unaccountable and pretentious monarch, whose posings and posturings, in one way or another, were always causing stirs in European Chancellories. Was he really as fierce and martial-looking as his pictures? Was he quite so fascinating, quite so omnipotent as he fancied himself? Only once in my life had I seen him. And that was upon the occasion of Queen Victoria's funeral, when, as a child, from a window in Pall Mall I had watched him riding immediately behind the gun-carriage, with its brilliant, flag-draped burden. He rode with a grey, set face of statuesque immobility, beneath an eagle helmet, his shrivelled arm held tightly to his side. Something of the bold, imperious outline and of the grave, carven face remained in my memory, together with my childish astonishment at the long hours of funereal panoply, radiating from so simple and beautiful a focus as a dead Queen on a gun-carriage, veiled in the flaming standard of her country. . . .

Well, now perhaps, I was going to be given the opportunity of seeing the Emperor again—and perhaps not. Anxiously, as the days slipped by, we waited for the Queen's decision. It came—and was for us the first example of Her Majesty's deep sense of—shall I call it "fair play"—at any rate of careful consideration for the feelings of others, of which we were to be given instances without number during the long years of our service.

The Queen said, upon this occasion, that she would make no choice among us, that the ordinary routine of "waitings" must be followed, and that the State visit should fall to whichever couple of Maids of Honour happened to be on duty. A calendar! A calendar! Anxiously we scanned the days—and my heart gave a throb of excitement as I saw that my "waiting" inevitably coincided with the arrival of the foreigners.

I began at once, mentally, to con over my stock of German, so laboriously acquired in the schoolroom. Anyone who aspired to a Court appointment in pre-war days had to possess at least a fair smattering of French and German, but I found that the latter accomplishment had become a little rusty in my case. It did not seem to extend much beyond meteorological observations, polite requests for condiments, and anxious inquiries about health. This would never do, for surely I could not—for a week—continue to comment on the weather—or to ask the Empress's "lady" how her "magen" was, even though, from a long experience of German governesses, I had learnt it was the organ most liable to disorders in a German constitution! I hurried, therefore, to the ever-hospitable doors of Mr. Berlitz, and there, with the help of a patient but firm young man, whose powers of repetition should have earned him a seat in Parliament, I brushed up my halting, stumbling phrases, in preparation for a week of uninterrupted converse with the German suite.

Clothes had then to receive attention and kept me busy until the actual day of their arrival, May the fifteenth. My sister Maid and I were to be at Buckingham Palace by eleven-thirty that morning. The Royal visitors were expected at noon. We were delighted to hear that Princess Victoria Louise, the Emperor's only daughter, would accompany her parents, for the Princess was very young and full of life, and we felt sure that her presence would considerably enliven the Imperial visit.

On arrival at the Palace, we passed at once into the drawing-rooms adjoining the Entrance Hall, and here we found the two Ladies-in-Waiting who had already arrived. "You must take off your hats," they said. "The Queen's Household receives Royalties here as if at home." Oh, dear, oh, dear! was there a looking-glass? There was. Many anxious moments, then, in front of it, and a minute scrutiny of side-curls revealed the fact that not much damage had been inflicted by the kind of soup-plate hats that were then in fashion. We waited, drawing on our long white gloves. The Kaiser would kiss the hands of all the ladies, we were told. Ah, that would be the kind of thing that great-grandmamma would recount to her little descendants over the fire at bed-time. "I remember when the Emperor of Germany kissed this old hand, my dears," etc., etc.

Mercifully, the terrible future was veiled on that bright

May morning, as the stalwart figure in the grey frock-coat strode into the hall of Buckingham Palace, and the hand that let loose such terrible thunderbolts upon Europe was held out to us all in friendliest greeting.

But he kept us waiting some time for this. Half-an-hour passed—and still they had not arrived. The Gentlemen of the Household in Waiting joined us. We stood about in that state of rather nervous anticipation when it becomes impossible to carry on a connected conversation, and the mind hovers restlessly and inconsequently among trifles. As the moments flew I had a curious feeling that my ears were growing longer on my head in their efforts to catch the first sound of the approaching event. We all know that feeling, and the despairing consciousness that afflicts one at the last moment of some disastrous lack—something forgotten or overlooked that assumes the guise of the only raft in the storm, the only hope of our successfully passing the coming ordeal.

Suddenly, voices in the hall. . . . No, not the long-expected arrival, but a lady in deep mourning, talking rapidly to Sir Charles Frederick. Smiling in animated converse, she looked over her shoulder at us, then presently came in and shook hands with Lady Ampthill and Lady Minto. They curtsied deeply. Who was it? Then, as she turned towards my sister Maid and me, I saw her face fully for the first time. It was Princess Victoria, the King's only unmarried sister. She held out her hands to us with smiling informality.

"And here are the new Maids of Honour," she said "Now where do *you* stand when they arrive? Behind Lady

Ampthill? Is Sir Charles very strict?" She laughed, this genial Royalty, clever, artistic, intensely humorous. She looked us over with twinkling eyes.

Queen Alexandra's Maids of Honour had been the lovely Vivian twins, the unmarried one of whom was still Princess Victoria's constant companion, and the other the wife of Sir Douglas Haig.

Now, behind the Princess someone was coming slowly towards us over the wide spaces of the wine-red carpet, someone whose flowing veil fell softly round slim shoulders, and framed an oval face, in which the large blue eyes held a kind of limpid, child-like grief. On her black dress was no ornament of any sort, but a large bunch of Parma violets pinned low on the breast. The shrouding veil cast soft shadows on the flowers. She gave to each of us in turn her slender, black-gloved hand—smiled an utterly enchanting smile, as her eyes filled with tears. I knew of course who it was. For who of us who have ever come into contact with that peculiar charm would ever be likely to forget it? And who can say in what it lay? In a regular beauty of feature? In the large soft eyes? In a sweetness? In a gracious sympathy? In an apparent understanding of the feelings of others? It is never possible to know exactly where that mysterious and powerful talisman resides. It is a gift of the gods as illusive as the will-o'-the-wisp that puzzles the distracted traveller. Now he thinks it is here—now there. Now it has gone—now it reappears, all the stronger for its absence. But never can he lay his hand upon it, or tell exactly what it is.

The charm of Queen Alexandra was a far greater power than her beauty, which faded—than her youth, which disappeared. For it remained entirely unimpaired by the loss of both. On this May morning, with that youth far behind her—a widow—in sorrow, no longer a reigning Queen, she wielded that great gift with no uncertain hand. Her eyes were dimmed by the tears she would not shed, yet a few of which fell, at last, like crystal drops down her cheeks.

She shook hands—and smiled—and went away. Yet we were struck dumb by a curious sense of homage, and the deep impression she left behind her lingered, like the scent of her violets, in the stately room.

The Dowager Queen felt deeply that day not only her personal loss, which was profound, but the change in her position which this coming State visit emphasised for the first time. For it was the first occasion that a reigning Sovereign had visited Buckingham Palace since her widowhood, the first time she had not welcomed him as mistress of this great domain.

It had been arranged that she should receive the Kaiser and Kaiserin privately and alone, in a small room, just as soon as they had been publicly received in the hall.

They must now be very close, we thought, and came into the hall, grouping ourselves on the steps. The Master of the Household and his officials stood near the now wide-open doors. A faint sound of cheering reached us from the Mall as scarlet outriders swung into the courtyard, followed by two State landaus, which drew up at the steps with a great clattering of hoofs and harness.

They had arrived at last, and in a few moments there came into the hall, amid the bowing officials, our own King and Queen, accompanied by a man in a grey frock coat, and a button-hole, whom I barely recognised as the German Emperor, so completely did civilian clothes change his physical appearance. What I had remembered as an imposing, martial figure of some height, appeared now as a man of medium height, of no great personal distinction, broad-shouldered, with abrupt, exuberant manners, and jerky movements. With him were two ladies with very long, full skirts, and enormous round hats (like halos, trimmed with feathers) at the very backs of their heads. Fashions were absurd enough in England in those days. Apparently they were absurder still in Germany. Even to eyes accustomed to the strange silhouettes of women in cart-wheel hats, bunchy skirts and leg-of-mutton sleves, these German outlines struck a bizarre note.

Princess Victoria Louise was just as much encumbered as her mother with absurd superfluities, but her extreme slenderness and fairness and youth lent a charm even to these strange fashions. The Empress was good-looking in a statuesque way. Her masses of very white hair were smoothly piled up from her forehead. She possessed great personal dignity and a benignant expression. Large-boned and tall, she moved slowly, and seemed to tower above her husband.

At night, in sumptuous brocades, with a high crown of diamonds in her glistening, snow-white hair, and with her magnificent jewels, she was beautiful and impressive. Placidity and goodness seemed to radiate from her. The Princess was sweet. She had no looks at all, but she was fair and elegant and very slight, and her features were redeemed from insignificance by the vitality of her expression. She had a quick, excited manner, and her rather small blue eyes laughed continually. I do not think I have ever met anyone with such *joie de vivre*. From the moment of her arrival, she never stopped going. She wished to see everything there was to see in England in a week. If she found no other time for it, she went sight-seeing before breakfast. She would dance all night and be out at eight next morning.

She intended to see the sun rise, from St. Paul's Cathedral, to visit Windsor Castle from battlements to cellars, to see Westminster Abbey and the Tower, and the National Gallery—and all the plays!

By the middle of the week, her Lady-in-Waiting collapsed and retired to a well-earned bed. But the Princess's energies showed no sign of slackening, and one of the Queen's ladies was therefore appointed to accompany her upon her endless expeditions.

The Emperor, now carrying his top-hat in his hand, was talking to everyone in the hall. They all came up the steps together. I prepared myself for an Imperial salute upon the fingers, but as the Kaiser was carrying his top-hat in his right hand, I didn't quite see how he was going to manage it. They stopped in front of us, and the Queen presented her ladies. To each of us he gave one finger, whilst with the other four he clutched his hat. I all but laughed. It was such an anti-climax, yet his smiling acknowledgments of our curtsies was all that could be desired. The Empress shook hands, and the little Princess nodded and smiled at us, keeping very close to her mother. They all passed, without further delay, into the drawing-rooms.

I drew a long breath of relief, but our duties were by no means over. The Imperial suite were now arriving, and we had to go down into the hall and be introduced to them all. Poor things! They felt strange in these foreign surroundings, after a long and tiring journey, and we were all glad we could talk to them and make them feel more at home.

There were three ladies, two of them in cart-wheel hats almost as big as the Empress's. The third lady was an imposing dame in a purple bonnet, who moved with the dignity and slowness of an entire procession. I learnt that she was the Mistress of the Robes. She had a severe and piercing eye, I thought, and I was glad to think that I did not have to live through my "waitings" under its predatory beam.

During the course of the week, I was one day late for lunch at the Palace, and had to enter the dining-room alone. She leant forward from her place, looked at me fixedly and remarked in halting English: "You are late." Here was German tact, I thought, and flushed disconsolately. Then I caught a mischievous little twinkle in her frosty eye and realised that she was teasing, and amused at my confusion. She was probably charming, but I had little to do with her, and never even mastered her name, which sounded long and harsh.

The Princess's "lady" was little more than a girl, desperately shy and rather overwhelmed by the whole visit. As best we could, we made them feel at home.

The Kaiser's gentlemen were stiff, square-shouldered men, peering over very high collars, and clicking their heels if we so much as looked at them. A particularly small and square little man fell to my lot for most of the week. I sharpened my German on him tirelessly. He had a name that sounded like "Oddest."

That night we danced in the Picture Gallery, under glittering chandeliers, the high walls crowded with paintings, glowing richly mellow in the radiant lights. We danced at one end of the long saloon. Most of the Royal Family in London were there, either dancing or strolling about. It was then that I first realised the beauty of the Empress. She was in dark blue brocade, worked with a golden design of palms, a priceless fabric that swathed her fine, full figure in graceful folds, enhancing the dazzling fairness of her neck and shoulders, which were magnificent. Resting on her smooth, snowy hair was a huge, all-round crown of diamonds. She wore ropes of pearls and many diamond orders, and had a train long enough for four pages to carry, which she manipulated herself with easy grace.

The Emperor appeared only for a moment. The Battenberg Princes, Prince Arthur of Connaught, and the Queen's tall dark brother, Prince Algy of Teck, all danced, and kept things going. The little German Princess in spangled tulle was most energetic. To dance with any of the Kaiser's stiff gentlemen seemed to me absurd—they were so obviously created for more serious pastimes. I did, I think, attempt one dance with my little friend, Major Oddes, but spent most of the evening with Prince Maurice of Battenberg, Princess Beatrice's tall, good-looking son, who gave his life for his country so early in the War. In the tragic light of the future—how strange this evening now appears!

One cannot but be thankful that the veil of that future was unrent—that no sun had yet risen on these sorrows, and that there were still three years before that sinister August dawn.

CHAPTER VI

A STATE VISIT TO BUCKINGHAM PALACE (II)

THE UNVEILING

May, 1911.

THE great monument which dominates the rotunda in front of Buckingham Palace towered—shrouded and mysterious—in the May dawn. The mummifying sheets were tightly swathed round the central figure. The white, imperious Queen, whom Londoners coming down the Mall are so accustomed to, was not yet ready to face her new public—to enter upon her monumental immortality as part of that London she knew so well. Year after year, from her high seat above the fountains, she would look down upon its busy life, glimmering white and impersonal in the dawn, darkly outlined against inflamed skies at sunset, seeming to dwarf with her petrified sovereignty the very Palace that for so many years she called her home.

To-day—the sixteenth of May—in the second year of her descendant's reign, she was to be unveiled before all London—by the hand of that German grandson who had journeyed specially from his country to perform his last act of amity upon her shores. The Kaiser loved and respected his grandmother, we are told, and was glad to pay her this final homage.

A circular barrier of stands encompassed the statue and in its immediate vicinity were enclosures, to which only the very privileged were to be admitted. All traffic between

Constitution Hill and the Mall was to be stopped, and the King and Queen with their Imperial guests would walk along a red carpeted way from the Palace to the Memorial. And here, upon the steps, the Kaiser would perform the unveiling, and afterwards lay a wreath at the feet of this Queen, whose family ideals and national aspirations he would, three years later, so hopelessly violate and betray.

The morning dawned clear and fine. From an early hour large forces of police were required to regulate the crowds who swarmed down the Mall and through the Parks, all converging upon the Rotunda, all anxious to obtain a good view of the coming ceremony.

Driving up to the Palace in a closed brougham at eleven o'clock I created a mild sensation, as the people caught sight of the royal coat of arms on the doors. There was a rush at the gates, checked by the extended arms of the police, to see who was inside the dark little brougham, and I was glad that no knowledge of my insignificance could damp their loyal enthusiasm. In mauve satin, with a tightly coiffé-ed head, and long white gloves, I no doubt looked a good deal more imposing than I felt.

The public has, as a rule, very little accurate recognition of the Royal Family. Certain outstanding figures they always know, but the less conspicuous members of the House of Windsor are generally wrongly named. In this instance, I remember a long State drive to a Children's Coronation Fête in the summer of that year. The royal carriages proceeded at a foot's pace through dense masses of the populace, packed so close to the processional route that one could overhear their remarks. My sister Maid and I were driving in the fifth carriage with one of the Queen's gentlemen, and we heard a workman exclaim excitedly as we passed, "There go the Dook of Con*nort* an' 'is two lovely darters!" He vouchsafed this information with such amazing conviction that no one attempted to contradict him. We in the carriage found great difficulty in keeping our faces set to that degree of solemn impassivity that befitted the occasion.

When I arrived at Buckingham Palace on the morning of the unveiling, I found a little gathering in the Courtyard of members of the Royal Households and of the German suites, all waiting to proceed on foot to their places round the Memorial, on the further side of which a large red dais had been erected. It was already crowded with privileged spectators, diplomats and Court officials, and I was shortly told to proceed across to it.

Accompanied by two of the Queen's gentlemen, I walked through the Palace quadrangle out to the great space round the statue. Usually so full of traffic circling fussily round the bends, it now presented a curiously isolated appearance, guarded by police and soldiers. Under a fusillade of stares from the stands we walked slowly round until we reached the dais on the further side, and I took up my position on the steps.

The great veiled memorial towered above me in the sunshine. The red carpeted dais, edged with flowering shrubs, was brilliant with uniforms, military and diplomatic. There was a scent of flowers, and round us the railed-in enclosures presented a many-coloured phantasy of spring fashions. Already there were chiffons and muslins and bright parasols.

H.R.H. PRINCESS PATRICIA.

The view of the mouth of the St. Lawrence to be seen from the roof garden of the Citadel, was one at which H.R.H. was never tired of looking.

Most ladies, that year, wore cart-wheel hats, perched halo-wise upon solid battlements of hair. Foreheads were exposed in almost shameless nudity, but necks were covered and barricaded with whale-bone! I remember so well my tentative efforts to procure a low-necked blouse being checked by the curious aphorism: "No one but actresses wear low-necked blouses." I was, in those days, inclined to be a little stage-struck—and this piece of information whipped my enthusiasm for the drama to fever-point. What a marvellous life, to be sure, to be an actress—and to wear low-neck blouses! Should I be condemned to sit, all my life, whale-boned in the stalls?

I looked closely now over the bright-hued enclosures. No—apparently, no actresses. I wriggled my neck in its hard barricade with a resigned consciousness of forming one of a suffering, but elegant, majority.

Then I noticed Princess Patricia. Tall, and with a curious dignity of bearing all her own, her grace seemed quite unimpaired by the prevailing absurdities of fashion. As I looked at her, she came across to me and held out her hand with that sweet, rather deprecating smile I was to learn to know so well. I curtsied, and she spoke to me for a few moments, until, by a movement in the crowd, we became aware that the procession from the Palace had started. Their Majesties, with their Imperial guests and members of the Royal Family, could now be seen walking slowly across the quadrangle, attended by Court officials. Slowly the little procession wound its way out of the great gates, and in impressive silence skirted the monument.

Between bowing officials upon the steps, they mounted the dais, grouping themselves exactly opposite the shrouded statue. The King and Queen and the royal children, the Kaserin and her daughter, and most of the members of our own royal family then in England. Here, in the May sunshine, they were gathered, these many descendants of the august old Queen, sons and daughters, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

All faces were raised to the shrouded monument, all eyes to the august figure, whose outline could be dimly discerned through the sheets. Could she see them, this little group of crowned heads and royalties, unconscious perhaps in this hour of their honours, conscious only of their relationship to this wonderful old figure of the past? To each of them she must have been familiar enough, not so much as a Queen, but as the head of a family, one whose imperious personality dominated their comings and goings, and whose lovableness transformed every Palace into a home.

Memories of Osborne, of Windsor and Balmoral must have crowded thickly upon them in the still sunshine that day; vistas of an age whose last echo would die away upon this day's act of homage. There were very few preliminaries to so significant a ceremony. The German Kaiser stepped forward and walked up the steps to the foot of the Memorial. He stood there alone, a thick-set, upright figure, in the white uniform of the German Cuirassiers, with a silver eagle-crowned helmet. There was a slight pause, then someone put a cord into his hand. He looked up steadily at the monument—waited a moment with the cord in his hand—then stepped quickly back a pace—and pulled.

As at the touch of some magic wand, the shrouding sheets fell noiselessly away, and the great white Queen was unveiled to the eyes of London for the first time. There was silence, and then the crash of the National Anthem, played for the last time for the great dead, whilst everyone examined curiously the memorial that has become so familiar an apex to the Mall.

The magician whose act had disclosed it neither moved nor spoke. As still as the very statue, he stood at the salute, gazing up into the spring sunshine. And many times, through the terrible years that followed—years that killed the springs and made the sunshine a mockery, I have remembered that solitary figure as I saw it that day, standing alone at the foot of the memorial, looking up with curious intensity at that still Majesty in stone. A dead Queen—a living Emperor—and between them, in the shadow of the future, the greatest war that Europe has ever known.

Was this terrible menace to the nation whose guest he then was, already germinating in his mind? Or were his thoughts purely personal at the moment? Was he gazing up at a benignant grandmother? or facing an outraged Queen? Perhaps both—for their contacts must always have been curiously dual; and behind the calm benignity of their personal relationship must always have sounded the great destinies to which both were called, the voice of the nations whose representatives they were. Even on that day, he could not look up into the well-known face without becoming aware of its sceptre and crown, transmuting his memories of a grandmother into his recognition of a Queen.

After a moment, a great laurel wreath was placed in his hands, and without a word he stooped and laid it at her feet; then abruptly stepped back. Thus he paid his last homage to a reign—an affection—a loyalty that were for him now forever dead.

. . . .

That night there was a gala performance at Drury Lane. We dined at the Palace at seven. The royal carriage sent to fetch me was late (a rare occurrence) and I had to take a four-wheeler. The dear old Methuselah on the box whipped up his ancient nag when he heard where I wanted to be set down. We dashed round the new memorial in fine style, only to be stopped by an inexorable policeman at the gates of the Palace. I stuck my head out of the window, murmured the magic word "Household," and the officer's severity broke up into a smile, and he gave us a salute as, flicking up his old horse once more, my Jehu dashed us across the quadrangle with the air, if not the pace, of a Roman charioteer. I gave him a fabulous tip, as I had no time to wait for change, and, gathering my skirts round me, fairly ran round the corridors, arriving finally in the great drawing-rooms, flushed but triumphantly punctual.

We drove to the gala with a Sovereign's escort, through half-lighted streets. There was an immense crowd, and some confusion and difficulty before the suites had all found their places. My memories of the actual performance seem to be smothered by the roses which decorated the house from roof to auditorium. The scent of them was overpowering. Roses, pink roses everywhere in a very hot atmosphere, and Clara Butt singing "Land of Hope and Glory" behind banks of them. Uniforms—jewels—little bits of plays—and all the stars. I reached home late and rather exhausted.

The next day the King and Queen took their Imperial guests to Windsor. They were to start after luncheon in motors. Some twenty minutes before the cars were due, my sister Maid and I came into the Entrance Hall. We were not to go with the royal party, but it was our duty to be in attendance at the start. No one had yet appeared, and so we established ourselves upon one of the sofas, and prepared to wait. The minutes wore on. We started some discussion—I cannot remember what. Suddenly, a few paces away, I caught sight of a man's figure. Who could it be? He was quite alone. He had his back to us and was apparently engaged in examining one of the pictures.

I nudged my companion and pointed. "Who is it?" I whispered. She shook her head, as much at a loss as I was. We continued our conversation, lowering our voices, and keeping a wary eye on the mysterious stranger. One of the German suite, I decided. . . . All the same, he appeared to be very much at his ease, I noticed. He had his hands deep in his pockets and was whistling very softly below his breath.

A dawning suspicion began to form in my mind, and just as it had crystallised into certainty—the stranger swung round. It was the Emperor! We sprang to our feet. He looked across at us, smiling. "Now please to sit down, ladies," he said. "I did not come across to you before, as I felt sure you were enjoying being at your ease on the sofa for a moment. Is it not so?"

We were taken aback by this kindly penetration. "Well

—yes, sir," I said, blushing a little under his direct and rather severe glance. "You are both tired, eh? Of course you are. Now sit down again, please." He said this with such an indomitable air of command that we both dropped on to the sofa as quickly and humbly as if we had been a couple of his Uhlans.

He stood in front of us and talked, swaying a little on his feet. He wore the grey frock-coat and white boutonnière of the day of his arrival. His collar was unbecomingly low, but that was probably a German fashion. I was struck again by the loss of personal distinction which civilian clothes seemed to effect in him, for in uniform he was always impressive. He talked to us pleasantly for some moments, gesticulating freely. Then he asked us some questions about our duties and hours, all the time a little severe, but kindly, too, when he smiled.

To this day I have no notion what he was doing entirely by himself in the hall. Presently there were voices. Some Court officials were approaching. He broke off his conversation and turned to them. What they must have thought of us—sitting back at our ease on the sofa—with the Kaiser standing in front of us, I cannot imagine! But I could not but be grateful to him for the rest which his kind consideration had given us.

We had had already an inordinate amount of standing, and I was beginning to feel rather like a cab-horse "gone" —or going—at the knees! Royalties seem entirely immune from that kind of fatigue. I have never heard one of them complain of it. They can apparently stand for hours without any physical strain.

Presently the King and Queen, accompanied by the Empress and the little Princess, came into the hall, dressed for the short motor run. Four large Daimler cars drew up outside. They entered them quickly and were off. We saw no more of them that day.

Half-past eight o'clock next morning found me drinking coffee comfortably in bed, my mind very far from my royal duties. There was to be a State Ball that night, but that was a long way off. Until then . . . my thoughts occupied themselves with plans for a long motor run into the country. The day was glorious . . . it would be heavenly in the pinewoods . . . we could take our lunch. "Ping-ping," went the telephone. Now who? at this time of the morning? "Buckingham Palace."

Oh, heavens! I sat up. Would Miss Villiers come at once to the Palace. Princess Victoria Louise wished to have a practice lesson in the Royal Quadrille—the dancing mistress was coming at 9.30. The practice would be in the Princes' schoolroom. Was she mad? Could she never rest? Oh, well! . . . and out of bed I crawled, and into clothes I scrambled, arriving at the Palace, not in the best of tempers (and again in a four-wheeler) at the appointed hour.

The Princes' schoolroom was a cheerful apartment, and seemed, when I entered it, to be full of people. Here was Miss Walch, the celebrated dancing-mistress, parading about in black silk and looking, even at this strangely early hour for dancing, extremely gratified (it is, I think, the right expression) by this call upon her services.

She had already taken the floor, and was busy showing the two little Princes, Henry and George, the first figure of the Quadrille. She undulated backwards and forwards and the little boys watched her with grave attention, their cheerful morning faces seemed still to be shining from "La-La's" ministrations. "La-La" was the affectionate nickname for the much-loved nurse who brought up nearly all the Queen's children, and even nowadays gives advice, and sometimes help, in the nurseries of Her Majesty's grandchildren.

Mr. Hansell was, of course, there, the tall grave tutor who was the Prince of Wales's shadow in his early years, and Mademoiselle Dussau, Princess Mary's governess, sat in a window seat knitting. I rarely saw Mademoiselle when she wasn't knitting, and I used to wonder if she took those interminable socks to bed with her, and knitted in her sleep. When the war came she must have toed and heeled entire regiments!

Princess Mary, the little German Princess, the Prince of Wales and his brother Prince Albert (now Duke of York) were all talking and laughing together, preparing to take their places in the Quadrille.

It was certainly Miss Walch's great moment. She reigned supreme. We were all at her beck and call. She stood in the centre and grouped us round her. I found myself vis-à-vis to the Prince of Wales, whose partner for the dance was Princess Victoria Louise. The little Imperial Highness was thoroughly enjoying herself. Dressed in a white serge morning coat and skirt, and a soft white blouse with a very high collar, she looked as fresh as a white daisy.

Sir Derek Keppel gallantly partnered Mademoiselle

Dussau. Princess Mary danced with Mr. Hansell, and I with Prince Albert. Someone twittered brightly on an upright piano. So we started.

"Now!" said Miss Walch. Deedle-deedle-dee-thumpity-tumpity-tump. Off we went. But, despite the musical encouragement, despite commands—nay, entreaties—from Miss Walch, despite the best will in the world, we made a dreadful muddle of it. We bumped where we should have "chassé-ed," we tied ourselves into knots, we met in the middle where we should not have met at all. In fact, we perpetrated all the faults of thoroughly incompetent performers.

Princess Victoria Louise burst into peals of laughter, but the inexorable Miss W. insisted that we should begin all over again. Deedle-deedle-dee, once more. This time it was better and we got to the end of the figure without too many faults. Flushed with triumph, we dashed into the next, which in time we also mastered—and so on to the grande finale.

Then back we went and ran through it again, not too badly this time. Princess Victoria looked at her watch. "*Lieber Gott!*" she was due at the National Gallery at half-past ten—directors waiting to take her round. Off she flew, and so the party broke up, and I got my motor drive into the country after all.

CHAPTER VII

VIGNETTES

A. THE CORONATION DRESS

June, 1911.

"I REALLY *cannot* stand any longer."

"One moment, mademoiselle, one little moment longer . . ."

We were (far too many of us, it seemed to me), in one of those hot little cubicles where dresses are fashioned and tried on at the smartest of the west-end dressmakers. These were the little cells where, after many trying hours of abstinence and suffering, inspiration would at last descend and "creations" come into being to grace the Ascot lawns and the spacious drawing-rooms of Mayfair. But to-day it was so hot—so hot—June sunshine beat with ruthless intensity upon the asphalt outside, and here, in this small, white-walled space, there seemed to me to be too many satellites of the ruling deity.

Three of his lesser slaves were spreading out my train of solid cloth of silver to its fullest extent (mercifully the door had to be opened for this). They were on their knees, black-garbed, humble, impersonal, their mouths full of pins, their hearts full of little secret histories clamped down in their flat bosoms by the ruthless iron of their professional work. The silver cloth glittered like sun-struck waters under the glare of the overhead light. The pearl and crystal embroidery of lover's knots and roses, that frothed and rippled in exquisite festoons, looked as if no human hand could have worked it. Surely it was done by the fairies in the watches of the night, when the tall, painted mannequin girls had retired on 'buses to suburban homes, when the fitters were hushing babies or heating soup for invalid mothers, when the great Monsieur himself had retired into some overheated palatial home where clothes need never be worn. . . .

These were my thoughts, whilst outwardly I stood as patient and humble as the rest, before the decrees of this master of fashion. The dress was very heavy. I wished it could have been made of some lighter material. Solid cloth of silver in the year Nineteen hundred and eleven was very solid indeed, very far removed from the soft, glittering fabrics of present-day wear.

It seemed to me that the dress hardly needed anyone inside it at all; it could have stood up by itself. My body, however, was tightly swathed in its steely folds, and the train of the same material was immensely long. I thought grimly of the long walk up the Abbey aisle behind the Queen, of the eternal standing, weighed down by this exquisite and expensive armour . . . Oh, well, coronations are not everyday occurrences, and I should, no doubt, be well rested before the next one!

"Now, if mademoiselle will kindly come out, we will try effects walking up and down in the larger space outside." Moving was difficult, but I glided out like a long silver frigate on to the green seas of the showroom floors—up and down under expert eyes I walked, the tulle veil like a white mist round my shoulders.

"Mademoiselle will wear her diamond bandeau in front of the Court feathers?—*C'est ça.*" The veil and Court feathers on my head were obligatory. The bandeau would be a matter of choice. Each of the four Maids of Honour wore what suited best her style of coiffure. But something which bound the hair closely round the face, making as statuesque and classic an outline as possible seemed appropriate.

The fat, pigeon-breasted dress-designer stood like a Napoleon against the show-case of glittering hair ornaments—his marshal, the lean head-fitter, her chest beaded with dismal jet, her eyes malicious and unsatisfied behind the glitter of her professional smile.

"Slowly . . . slowly . . . *c'est ça.*" . . . I advanced towards them, gliding in my silver panoply beneath the blatant sky-lights, self-conscious, a little tired, my young slim body oppressed by the weight and grandeur of this exquisite armour, incised with crystal and pearls. "It's much *too* magnificent. I don't feel as if I could carry it off," I murmured. The great man was scandalised. "Mademoiselle must remember that it is for a magnificent ceremony," he objected. "Mademoiselle must think of the grandeur of the Abbey church lit for a coronation. Once—perhaps twice—in a generation such a thing happens. It is only right that every detail concerning it should be of the utmost magnificence."

I closed my eyes for a moment, and as in a dream saw the magic of that dim architecture, dusky with the bloom of time—five days hence, blazing into life and colour for the greatest ceremony of the English liturgy—saw, rising against the age-old walls tiers of white plumed heads like beds of lillies, bands of choristers as red as little roses, the golden bishops guarding the blazing altars, the trumpeters, the fields of red-robed peers, and—in the midst—kneeling among mitred bishops, the canopied figure of the new King, glittering in the super-tunica, and the Queen, pale, amidst her silver suite. . . .

I opened my eyes and smiled at the funny little man, who was busy adding his small mite to the great picture. "You are quite right. One would look absurd in an ordinary ball dress. It requires something quite out of the ordinary—like this."

He was pleased with the compliment, pleased with his finished "creation," one of so many he would send to the Abbey. Soon afterwards they relieved me of my heavy sheath, and I wriggled thankfully back into the thin morning frock that seemed a more suitable garment in which to face the blazing streets.

B. THE BEGUM OF BHOPAL

June, 1911.

THE wide lawns of the Palace Gardens seemed to have flowered in one gigantic bed of colour. The Garden Party crowds were so thick that the soft green spaces were no longer visible, and bright summer frocks and parasols, glittering native dresses and grey and black frock-coats made a brilliant, ever-moving spectrum of colour.

Stretched taut upon its solid silver poles, the deep red royal "shamiana" spread a welcome shade. Here, across the back, a " buffet " stretched its white length, glittering with gold plate ; golden kettles, tea-pots and urns giving a look of priceless magnificence to this picnic in the open. The royal servants, in red and gold, moved noiselessly to and fro in the deep red shade. The silver poles stood, glittering sentinels, before this luxurious retreat. The scent of malmaisons that stood in golden vases, the sharp little tang of mown grass, mingled with " *bouffées* " of heavy French perfume from the passing crowds.

Their Majesties were having tea. Grouped round two or three little tables, the royalties sat with some of their more distinguished guests. Among these was a quaint figure I had been watching with no little interest all afternoon. It presented certainly a very strange appearance. It might have been a man—or a woman—or a child, for its person was entirely concealed in loose robes of some rich damask. It wore a small turban, from which hung a heavy piece of damask of the same material as the dress, completely veiling the head and face. There were eye-holes in this curtain (it was hardly less) through which one glimpsed occasionally the mysterious glitter of black eyes. Round the tambourine-shaped turban was pinned a splendid diamond tiara. This magnificent ornament above the blank folds of the yashmak produced a very curious and uncanny effect.

Ropes of pearls hung down the figure almost to its feet. It looked like a mysterious Buddhist idol, yet it moved about and conversed, gesticulating freely with small, white-gloved hands, and now there it was, sitting down to tea with Their

Majesties. It was a hot July day, at the end of the London season. Poor creature, I thought, it must be suffocated behind that curtain—and how will it eat?

I watched. A little, white-gloved hand seized the sandwich it was offered, and transferred it deftly behind the curtain, where one supposed it to be mysteriously nibbling. "Who is it?" I asked. "That is Her Highness the Begum of Bhopal, one of the wisest and most enlightened of Indian rulers." "A lady?" I asked doubtfully, glancing at the bunchy little outline. "Yes, a lady, and Regent for her son, the Rajah."

My curiosity was fully aroused. "What is she like?" That, very few people knew, I was told. She hardly ever unveiled, except to her own immediate female entourage. Now what will she do with her cup of tea, I thought? Will that, too, go behind the veil? She did nothing with it, but left it untouched.

There is a curious element in human nature that is roused by anything debarred, inaccessible, forbidden. It stirred in me now. How I should like to see what lay behind that thick green curtain. I knew the Rajah to be quite a little boy; therefore she might very well still be young and fascinating, with a beauty I had seen in many Indian women. What a pity, then, to go about like a mummy. However, I had many other things to occupy my thoughts, many people to talk to and to see, and the mysterious ruler was completely banished from my mind, when, half-an-hour later the genial Master of the Household laid his hand on my shoulder.

"Will you please take the Begum into the Palace. Her

Highness wants a glass of iced water to drink, and to rest for a little while," he said. I was not at all surprised, remembering the untasted tea and the oppressive heat of the afternoon. But I hesitated, looking rather timidly towards the strange figure as it stood in converse with several Indians near the royal tent.

"Does she speak English?" I whispered. He nodded. "Come along, I will present you." I followed obediently, and was led up to the Begum. She turned round at our approach and again I caught the glitter of black eyes behind the slits in the green curtain. I curtsied, and when my name was pronounced she nodded her head graciously. "I will show your Highness the way indoors," I said timidly.

Without a word, she started walking rapidly towards the Palace. We passed together through the crowds, everyone making instant way for the mysterious little figure, for, though nothing could be seen of her, the beautiful jewelled crown on her head, and her whole walk and bearing proclaimed her what she was, a ruling Princess of India. At last we were free of the crowds, and passed up the terrace steps. I brought her into one of the cool, high reception rooms, and, begging her to sit down, rang the bell.

She sank into one of the arm-chairs with an audible sigh of relief. I stood motionless, watching with breathless curiosity, as her little, white-gloved hands fumbled with the yashmak. Was she going to unveil? I had decided, by this time, that she was very beautiful. She had a delightful voice, and of course the Indian robes accounted for the general bunchiness of outline.

" Who will answer your bell ? " she asked sharply. I was rather surprised. " A footman, your Highness." " Ah," she said, " then I must wait." I was thrilled, for surely this remark must mean that she did indeed intend to throw back the curtain when the servant had left the room. She folded her white-gloved, little hands in her lap, and remained motionless and speechless, until the footman entered.

I asked him to bring a glass of iced water, and he hurried away. I looked down at the figure in the chair, now more than ever like an eastern idol. The glittering tiara above the curious blankness of the yashmak was certainly very strange. Intercourse with someone whose face and expression one can only guess at, produces a curious sense of deprivation.

I felt completely at a loss. " Your Highness is feeling this great heat ? " I ventured. She turned her veiled features up to me. " Yes, but it is cooler in here. Presently I will take off my gloves." " Can I assist your Highness ? " I said, stooping. " Not now," she said quickly, " for the servant could not come in when my hands were bare." Such heights of modesty seemed strange to a European mind.

The footman came in with a glass of water. I took the salver from him and presented it to her. She carefully watched the man's departure, and, as he closed the door, she gave a long sigh. *Now*, I thought, she will unveil and I shall see huge, liquid brown eyes, with a fabulous fringe of lashes, a smooth matt skin—a lovely pointed face . . .

The Begum, with a deft movement, threw back the yashmak. She was very old—her skin was pitted as if she had been peppered by some careless shot . . . She had no eyebrows—and quite small eyes. She smiled as she took the glass of water from my hands, a smile marred by a great many black teeth. So are our illusions shattered! Yet not altogether—for after she had drunk the water, she began to talk. And I saw the intelligence behind the eyes, and could guess a little at the wisdom and the force that had made her what she was, an outstanding figure among the princely rulers of India. I had heard that she was herself nearer our conception of a constitutional monarch than any of the other Princes, and that she governed with great sagacity.

I watched the intelligence of her expression—the vigour of her gestures, the shrewdness of her glance. She was so kind, so gracious, so very much revived by the iced water that she sat and talked for some time. Through the great windows we could see the many-coloured crowds thronging the lawns, and the strains of the military band were faintly audible. It was nice to be away in here, sheltered from the heat, the glare, the inanities—alone—in the high, cool room, with this great old ruler.

Presently, there were sounds of someone coming. The Begum became agitated. To my dismay (for I was rapidly becoming fascinated by her expressive face), she drew the heavy damask veil down again. "Is it the footman returning?" she asked in a rapid whisper. "I think so, your Highness." She laid her hand on my arm. "Then you must stop him," she said peremptorily. "He must on no account come in until I have my gloves on." I rushed to the opening door, and was just in time to prevent the man from entering. "Remain outside until you are called," I said, and returned to the Begum.

She was hurriedly pulling on her little white gloves. I dropped to my knees and buttoned them up for her. They were very tight. We laughed over it. "Must even the hands be veiled in your country, Highness?" I asked.

"Certainly—from a man," she said.

The Begum, now once more a Buddhist idol, returned to the Garden Party, and I brought her safely back to the red shamiana.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CORONATION OF KING GEORGE V

June 22, 1911.

TO be present at a Coronation is, after all, a rather unique experience, it lingers in the memory as a moment of great dramatic intensity and concentration. For under whatever circumstances it takes place, in whatever country the ceremony is performed, the crowning of a king is in every sense a Sacramental act, that is to say, an outward and visible sign of a Spiritual event; a visualising in as dramatic and significant a form as possible, of a definite and occult tradition.

Gradually, through the course of centuries in England, the Coronation service has been enriched and has gathered round itself an elaborate and complicated ritual, so that when, in these latter days it is performed at Westminster with full ceremonial pageantry of Church and State, it is a dramatic epic, as solemn, as significant as the Mass. Indeed, I think it resembles this great service of the Catholic Church in more ways than one.

In the number of small, and in themselves insignificant, actions performed with conscious power and with full regard to an occult significance; in the gradual formation by them of the requisite atmosphere for the performance of the ultimate act, to which they are, so to speak, the emblazoned prelude; in the slowly increasing emphasis on that which is about to happen; and in the intensified solemnity of the ritual as it proceeds to its great apotheosis. But in the ultimate development, the two great services differ, for where the Mass reaches its ceremonial peak in a profound silence, a Coronation blazes to a culminating moment of sound and light and colour.

In countries where monarchy is a part of the constitution, the King may have a small or great part in the lives of his subjects, according to his personal prestige, but as a rule, he is, as a function of the State, taken very much for granted, and only in moments of crisis do his people realise how integral and individual a part he plays in the established order. Such a moment of crisis occurred in this country during the present King's serious illness in 1928. Such a moment is a Coronation. For that day at least, he is a living reality to his people. Their thoughts, their minds, their hearts, are concentrated on the Throne, and this fact plays no small part in the magic of those hours of his consecration.

My own part in the Coronation of King George V was necessarily small, but even so, as I followed the Queen on that June morning of 1911 up the nave of the Abbey—that gracious old Abbey—which enshrines English history in the dim memorial of its stones, and as behind the blaze of ceremonial pageantry and modern lighting, the rich old walls and jewelled windows still gave their mellow and undaunted message of ageless stability, I felt myself no longer individually, but collectively as part of an enormous and historic design.

It was at eleven o'clock precisely that Their Majesties' processions were at last formed in the Annexe and were ready to enter the Abbey through the West door. There were so many people, such a kaleidoscope of colour and movement in this temporary addition to the Abbey, where we all waited, that it seemed little short of miraculous that any processional order at all could emerge from such apparent chaos.

Arriving royalties, heralds—pages—ushers—Court functionaries—royal servants—all jostling each other in a fine confusion. Miss Mabel Gye, my sister Maid-in-waiting and I had arrived at nine o'clock. We had driven up to the doors of the Annexe in one of the King's carriages through already lively streets. Even at that hour people were beginning to crowd the red and yellow stands along the route. The morning was brilliant with sunshine and with flags, which hung limp in a warm still air. The King's servants were a red and gold symphony of colour on the black box-seat, and Miss Gye and I, in our silver dresses, our veils and feathers and diamond ornaments no doubt added to the general magnificence. In Parliament Square, as we swung into it from Victoria Street, there reigned a nervous and spasmodic confusion. Mounted police shepherded the still thin and uncertain crowds, ticket-holders scurried to and fro in importunate groups; here and there Peers deserting their carriages, already robed, and escorting glittering consorts, slunk guiltily, self-consciously along. Coaches and carriages were swinging up to the Abbey doors. There was no great press of them for the Annexe where only Royalties and those actually taking part in the processions arrived, and we drove up under the gaily striped awning without much delay. With hitching of trains and gathering of veils, we descended and were immediately hidden away from the daylight, colour, and gaiety of the streets, engulfed at once in a hushed official atmosphere, enclosed by the close red curtains which formed a tunnelled entrance to the vast Annexe, specially built for the occasion of the Coronation. Flowering plants on either side of this corridor carpeted in red baize, and on its shallow steps, functionaries in incredible splendours of lace and legs and feathered hats whispering, greeting, adjusting medals, agitating and gesticulating with papers, enforcing an exotic atmosphere even in this temporary domain.

Miss Gye and I advanced, duly solemn and impressed, befeathered and burdened with our long heavy silver trains. A glint of silver in the dark doorway of the Annexe heralded, we felt sure, our two sister Maids, who must have already run the gauntlet of these elegant and official agitators. Suddenly the Duchess of Devonshire's small diamond-crowned head appeared above the sea of gold epaulettes. She was standing on one of the shallow steps, talking to friends, and greeting people as they passed into the Annexe. Lady Desborough, with a lovely dark-haired, scarlet-clad page, the youngest of her three sons, passed up, smiling and scintillating, her hand on the boy's shoulder, to be engulfed in the dark doorway. She beckoned us and we followed, and so, slowly, with a great press of lace and feathers and swords we passed through the entrance into the lighted and kaleidoscopic bustle of the Annexe.

" There are Sybil and Venetia," I whispered. Our two sister Maids, in identical silver panoply, joined us. It would, I think, be under-stating the case to call Monsieur R—'s creations for this occasion dresses. The silver cloth was of so stiff a fabric that it could almost stand up by itself, and one really felt more upholstered than dressed! It swathed us so tightly, that we must have looked like great silver fish with long tails. Round our sparsely covered shoulders the material had been lightened with lace. On our foreheads we wore diamond fillets, that bound the hair tightly to our heads, making them look very small beneath the three proudly erect white feathers. From these sprang our ample white tulle veils, cascading softly over the brilliant stuff. We formed, no doubt, a picturesque and glittering group, and attracted a good deal of attention. "Who are they?" I heard—"Oh, the Queen's Maids." "I feel rather Mary Beaton and Mary Seaton-ish," I said. Miss Baring, Lord Ashburton's daughter, and Miss Sybil Brodrick (now Lady Sybil Graham, wife of our Ambassador at Rome), certainly made a lovely and stately pair. Of much the same height, both fair, and tall and slender, they were perfectly matched, and were to walk together up the aisle.

But that dramatic moment was, as yet, a long way off. We were in for a two-hours' wait; yet the time did not hang heavily on our hands, for there was so much going on, so many strange and lovely things to see and watch.

Indian Princes were robing in corners, taking from boxes incredible jewels, festooning themselves with pearls, pinning fabulous aigrettes to their turbans. The Earl Marshal arrived with a cohort of laced and feathered satellites. The late Duke of Norfolk with his square, black beard, made an imposing figure in the uniform of his office, despite his want of height. Glittering Chamberlains, like sleek cats, slunk softly in and out of the official crowds, and everywhere gay little swashbucklers in bright coats, with lace and swords and happy "morning faces"—the boy pages of the Peers, who were Officers of State and were to form part of the processions. Lady Desborough's boy with his dark curls and red coat, the Lord Chamberlain's page, the King's pages—they were all there, interested happy little spectators, fumbling with their absurd swords, pulling uncomfortably at lace cravats.

And all the time foreign royalties were arriving, attended by gentlemen in strange uniforms, or by flushed and fussy "ladies." Among them was the Crown Princess Marie of Roumania (the present Dowager Queen); born an English Princess, a daughter of the late Duke of Edinburgh. I had heard much about this lady, and was therefore interested to see her for the first time in the flesh. Upon this occasion she was indeed a remarkable figure, with her wonderful jewels, startling fairness, and vividly blue eyes. Queen Marie, as she is to-day, is one of those people possessed of a personality remarkable, not so much for strength, as for a kind of relentless insistence that sweeps everything before it. Wherever she is, not only is it impossible to overlook her presence but she seems to agitate and quicken things, to pervade everything, to permeate to the furthest confines of possible influence—like water in a sponge. I remember once during the war, years after the Coronation, seeing her again when she came on a visit of inspection to a Club at which I happened to be doing war-work. Surrounded by a great many gentlemen, she swept through the rooms, and one was reminded of one of those first sharp breezes of autumn, the first that one can call a wind, that sweeps away all the superfluities of summer. We were braced, we were stirred, a little thrilled, and in a sense, tidied up by the visitation of this gracious and benign tornado. She has undoubtedly much grace and charm, and a very real beauty. On the occasion of the Coronation, she seemed to dominate the Annexe, when she arrived in a great bustle of foreign-looking ladies and gentlemen, bare-headed servants and obsequious ushers. She had a bevy of friends and acquaintances to greet, who formed at once a miniature Court round the dazzling centre of her blonde magnificence.

And presently, quite unwillingly, I found myself a member of this little circle. We four Maids-of-Honour were, by this time, rather hemmed into a corner by the crush of new arrivals. It seemed impossible to move, and when the Crown Princess added her cohort of attendants to the crowd, we found ourselves wedged in behind her, and yards of her marvellous embroidered white and gold train billowed round my feet. I happened to be wearing a long string of pearls lent to me for this occasion by my mother. There is certainly some sort of little devil who governs our actions whenever we are wearing or guarding someone else's property. He started operations with me now. The pearls caught in something, I don't remember what, only that the string broke and a shower of them cascaded all over and under the train of the Crown Princess. Some rolled up the seams, in a jocose manner, others rolled right under the stuff, a great many hid themselves in the folds, and one or two caught firmly in the exquisite gold embroidered wreaths on the material. A fine to-do! I became extremely flustered and upset, and at the same time fiercely determined to retrieve my property or die in the attempt. The Crown Princess was quite six feet or more away from the tail of her own dress, and was superbly unconscious of the oblation I had made her. She continued gesticulating, talking and laughing with those about her. I fell to my knees and began to collect the pearls, ferreting about rather like a small terrier after moles, round the edges of the beautiful train. Meanwhile the Princess continued to greet friends above my head. It took some time to find all the pearls, and to my horror, in the middle of my operations, the Princess began to move on. I followed, faint but pursuing, still snatching feverishly at my property, and when she stopped again to greet a fresh batch of friends, I resumed my humble position in the circle. I heard the barely suppressed and heartless laughter of my sister Maids as I continued to crawl in pursuit. At last I felt satisfied that I had regained them all. The Crown Princess was still unconscious of what had happened, or of how minute an examination had been made of her wonderful train! I counted anxiously. Still one missing! Back I returned to my knees and the train, locating at last what I now looked upon as an entirely horrible little bead, wedged primly between two gold leaves of the border. I picked it out, tied them all up in my handkerchief, and tried to appear cool and collected once more.

So great was now the press of people, that it had become impossible to see what was happening at the other end of the Annexe near the entrance to the Abbey. But the great doors were at last opening, and a blaze of lights revealed to us presently, above the heads of the people, the illuminated spires of age-less stone. There was commotion—a sound like a great rushing wind—a burst of boy's voices, like sprays of crystal above the dark tumultuous roar of the organ—golden crosses moving up slowly between the black forest of the choir stalls—miles away, before a blazing sanctuary.

"What is it? What is it?" we asked. "The King's Procession is entering the Abbey. Move forward please, the Queen's Procession will be forming."

In some hurry, yet perforce slowly, we worked our way through the people to the great doors of the Church, and it was vastly reassuring to come upon a kindly cousin amid a bevy of the Queen's ladies. "It won't be long now," she whispered, "keep close to me." We stood shoulder to shoulder in the busy, ever-moving throng. Ahead of us, some kind of procession did indeed seem to be forming; impossible though, to make out exactly what was happening.

Suddenly, through a gap in the crowd, I caught an exquisite glimpse of the Queen's trainbearers, gathered together like a cluster of tall white lilies, and hedged in by the golden copes of a multitude of clergy. There were six girls to whom this honour fell. Lady Eileen Butler, Lady Eileen Knox, Lady Victoria Carrington, Lady Mabel Ogilvy, Lady Dorothy Browne, and Lady Mary Dawson.

I stood on tip-toe and tried to see the Queen, but the press round her was too great.

There was still some delay, but imperceptibly now we were drawing closer to the doors. Lady Desborough was moving forward ahead of us with Lady Ampthill, Lady Bertha Dawkins, Lady Mary Trefusis, Lady Eva Dugdale and several more of the Queen's ladies.

It was, I suppose, a great moment, this entering of the Abbey in procession for a Coronation, but like most great moments, it was rather too confused at the time, too over-weighted with a multitude of subsidiary impressions, to stand out with any dramatic clearness. To begin with, it did not seem in the least like walking in a procession, but more as if we were just pushing our way gently through the crowds. Very little could be seen, except the back of the person immediately ahead of one. I was stunned by the roar of music and confused sound thundering—reverberating—round the great old church.

Yet for all that, when at last we mounted steps and looking up, I saw the matchless curves of the great west door soaring above me, I did win to a moment of detached consciousness. June 22nd, 1911. . . . Her Majesty the Queen Consort's Procession enters Westminster Abbey for the Coronation of King George V. . . . Except for the steps and the great soaring arch of the door above one, there seemed no very marked transition between the Annexe and the Abbey. Still the crowds, and some little confusion. We moved again, gently forward, then gradually the press about us seemed to lessen. We were standing on a very thick carpet, two by two. Someone hurried down the ranks whispering "Put down your trains." But surely that was impossible, I thought, they would simply be trampled under foot. I glanced back. To my astonishment, the people had melted away. There was ample room before the next couple came, in what really at last looked like processional order. We extended ourselves, ushers and pages helping to spread out our glittering tails on the sapphire blue carpet. I glanced sideways as we moved slowly forward, at the tiers of seats, mounting far up the jewelled windows, and packed with a feathered and uniformed crowd, standing shoulder to shoulder. Despite the want of space, every lady was curtseying low, which sent curious waves of movement along the lines. Then the Queen was presumably ahead of us. That was the first definite intimation I had yet had of Her Majesty's presence.

After that I did not look sideways any more, but straight ahead, or down at the glistening edges of Miss Baring's train that slipped slowly over the blue carpet just ahead of me.

The organ became deafening, augmented by great blasts of trumpets, as we approached at last that dark wonder of the choir. It received and enclosed us like a forest. In a dim mystery of Gothic design, the stalls threw up their points like black pine-trees against the sumptuous hangings from the tribunes above them.

From impossible eeries, right up against the fiery windows, people gazed down upon us, they looked like strange exotic birds clustered in nests, their plumage coloured in a hundred shades by the jewelled glass. Slowly, slowly, we advanced, through the thunderous tumult of music and a growing ecstasy of singing voices, and the theatre of the Coronation came into sight.

I was breathless with amazement at the magnificent staging, the deep and moving significance of the scene. The stalls in both transepts had been removed, and in the vast unencumbered apse, was a rich carpeting of blue pile. In the centre of this, upon shallow platforms, stood two golden thrones, and in a crimson throng, packed closely to the very doors, robed, invested and jewelled, was the peerage of England, their coronets in their hands. Before the High Altar, in a blazing chancel, amid the splendours of gold Communion vessels, in the bleached light of pale candles and paler lilies, mitred and coped in incredible vestments of gold, stood the Church of England in grave and stately significance round the stark simplicity of King Edward's black Chair.

This much I saw before (under the whispered directions of a personage in black and gold) I turned sharply to the left and mounted to my seat in a tribune of the North Transept.

My train on my arm, I climbed laboriously up the tiers of seats, higher and higher above the nave, until I finally reached my place. Just as I settled into it, I was startled by a great echoing shout resounding through the Abbey: "God Save the King!" Thus the Peers according their first recognition to the new Sovereign.

I found to my dismay, that my view was completely cut by the arch of the transept, and that I could see nothing whatever of what occurred on the platforms in the apse. But the area before the High Altar I could see, and by leaning well forward I caught, in vivid spasmodic glimpses, a series of unforgetable pictures of the scene.

After countless minor ceremonies, after interminable lengths of Litany and Sermon, after the King had made his first Oblation at the Altar, I heard the Coronation Oath, and then saw four Knights of the Garter, in their flowing blue mantles, raise and hold a silken canopy above King Edward's Chair. Like living statues of chivalry they stood as the Archbishop, in a crowd of his clergy, anointed the (to me) invisible occupant of the Chair on head and arms and breast from the Golden Anointing Spoon.

Then I saw the Dean of Westminster bending above the Chair in a cluster of the Bishops, with the sleeveless garment of white lawn on his hands, and then with the "Super-Tunica," the glittering tunic which is worn below the Dalmatic Robe, the sacred and magnificent Vesture for the Crowning.

The bestowal of the Orb and of the Sceptre, the placing of the Ring on the fourth finger, and the kneeling figure of the Lord of the Manor of Worksop presenting his pair of gloves, appeared to me only as a clustering of busy Bishops and Officers of State, moving with great dignity round the Chair, whose still occupant they were slowly loading with these emblematic burdens of Monarchy. Then at last, I saw the Archbishop alone at the High Altar, raising in both hands, as significantly, as reverently as if it were the Holy Cup, a shining thing, a blazing emblem, the Crown of England.

He consecrated and blessed it, and then slowly turned, girt about with the strange spiritual power of an immense significance, and faced the Chair, with the Crown, consecrated, between his hands. The Princes of the Church fell back from it, their work done, for the anointed King was ready, robed and sceptred and blessed. Thus the great Sacramental moment arrived, pregnant with history, hallowed by the centuries, yet always unalterably the same.

In a hushed silence, which had in it the subtle indications of a coming tumult, the Primate advanced, the shining thing in his hands. He stood above King Edward's Chair, where the robed and sceptred figure sat motionless and bare-headed, awaiting the consummation of its Sovereignty, and in one gesture of superb significance, he raised the Crown high above its head, then lowered it slowly . . . And in that instant, as the Coronation was completed, the silence was rent and shattered by a great cry of "God Save the King." There was the blaze of a thousand hidden lights and a long blast of trumpets, and over the vast assembly of the Peers, coronets and caps flashed up like red and golden balls. Behind all the tumult and movement and blinding lights, was the knowledge of a great historic consummation. . . .

I leant back in my seat and closed my eyes. During the interminable hours that followed I saw very little, for the crowned King had returned to his throne in the apse for the long ceremony of the receiving of homage.

This at last over, I leant forward again as the Queen and her attendants swept up into the Chancel for the second Coronation. Sitting alone at a faldstool before the High Altar, I saw Her Majesty anointed on head and hands and breast, a silken canopy above her held by the four Duchesses, of Sutherland, Portland, Montrose and Hamilton. And then, after the second Coronation, I saw the crowned King and Queen kneeling humbly together in the shining Chancel, their long mantles flowing back from them between kneeling white-clad girls and scarlet pages, receiving the Holy Communion in a hushed Heaven of music. The noble figures of the two Archbishops, brooding in their glittering vestments above the royal couple, reverently—solicitously—bending. . . .

There was then a return to the thrones in the Apse for the final prayers, after which, the processions were reformed and swept up together through the Chancel to St. Edward's Chapel, disappearing through the two doors on either side of the Altar, the King's to the right, the Queen's to the left. There followed an interminable wait while the music soliloquised softly, and everyone nibbled furtively at secret stores. It was understood that the Sovereigns would take some rest and refreshment . . . they would certainly need both.

It was half-past two. I sighed and stretched myself, and from the recesses of a small handbag, produced a minute piece of chocolate, which was all that I had been persuaded to take with me. I ate it very slowly, trying to convince myself that I did not wish it were twice the size. Being present at a Coronation was certainly a long and hungry business. I had already been five and a half hours at the Abbey. I wondered if the Queen was very tired, burdened with those heavy robes, and having gone through those interminable and very moving ceremonies. Then I remembered Queen Victoria's Diary, and how she bathed her Spaniel as soon as she got home from her Coronation. Perhaps to royalty these vast functions are not so trying. Then I looked round for my sister Maids. I had been far too busy and interested even to think of them before. After some searching I found two of them in the next tribune, on much the same level as myself. Presently, having nothing else to do, I began to worry as to how we should all join up again in the Nave. Beneath my feet stretched a solid slope of humanity, packed tightly to the very paving stones of the Apse. I knew that I should have to join the Queen's Procession again when it emerged from St. Edward's Chapel. How was one to carve a way down that congested mass ?

I was reckoning without a knowledge of the matchless staff-work of the Lord Chamberlain's Department. Long after I had finished my chocolate, just as I was beginning to think that nothing was ever going to happen again, I caught sight of my old friend, the black and gold gentleman, under whose direction I had reached my seat at the beginning of the Ceremony. He mounted steadily towards me, making his way with urbane courtesy through the ranks of seats. On reaching me he asked me to follow him down, as Their Majesties were almost due to emerge again from St. Edward's Chapel for the final Processions down the Nave. I asked nothing better than to move, for I felt stiff and cramped from so many hours of sitting. Gathering up my train, I made my way in his skilful wake down the crowded slopes of seats. As we slowly emerged from the shadowing arches of the tribunes, I caught my breath at the sight that lay immediately beneath me. The massed Peers and Peeresses in a crimson throng, the golden thrones on their platforms in the Apse, the multitudes of white-robed clergy, the Bishops in their glittering vestments, the blazing Chancel with its lilies and candles, and golden regalias of plate, the whole of the Royal Family, the Foreign Royalties, the strange uniforms of the Diplomats, the jewelled Rajahs, ranks of little scarlet pages, heralds and Kings-of-Arms in armorial tabards, robed choristers, Chamberlains in white and gold. I must have stopped, too breathless with amazed wonder to continue my progress, for this was a far better view than I had yet had. But a touch on my arm reminded me of my duties. "Their Majesties are just coming," said my guide. In truth, as I looked towards the Chancel, the doors on either side of the High Altar were open. I followed him down, and as I reached the Nave, the heads of the Processions were appearing. The music emerged from its soft soliloquy of the last half hour and burst into a martial fanfare of sound. And slowly, on either side of the shining Altar, the great Processions drew out of St. Edward's Chapel, the King's on the South side, the Queen's on the North. An amazing picture they made, of mediæval pageantry in the wide and glittering Chancel.

It was perfectly done, perfectly timed, the whole ceremony executed with matchless efficiency and with consummate regard to the general scenic effect, and the beauty and impressiveness of it was beyond anything I had ever imagined.

We ladies were, by now, all together, waiting to take our places as the Processions passed down on their way to the West door. And at long last, and simultaneously, the King and Queen appeared at the South and North doors beyond the Altar, crowned and in purple robes of State, their sceptres in their hands.

Very slowly they passed into the Nave to the blasts of trumpets. I looked anxiously into the Queen's face, she was paler than I had ever seen her, very calm and serene, but with the shadowed look of tears in her tired eyes. She looked as if she had felt the great ceremony deeply.

So they passed us, and so we at last stepped forward from the surrounding crowds to take our places in the final procession. We went out as we had come in, to the thunder of rejoicing music, to the shouts of "God Save the King! God Save the Queen!" and the high triumphant voices of the choirs.

CHAPTER IX

IN WAITING AT WINDSOR (I)

A SUMMONS to Windsor Castle for a fortnight's waiting necessitates a good deal of preparation in the way of clothes for all occasions, and when the actual day of departure arrived I always experienced a sense of relief that I was about to be incarcerated in a fortress which no dressmaker was likely to scale!

On the occasion of my first Windsor waiting I went down in the afternoon. A carriage from the Castle met me at the station, and we clattered quickly up the Castle Hill, by the statue of the old Queen, still dominating her well-loved Windsor, through Henry VIII Gateway, past the houses of the Military Knights, and finally entered the Upper Ward and drew up by one of the many small doorways in the Great Quadrangle. Here I entered the Castle, and was confronted by nothing more alarming than a tall footman in red, who waited by the grille of a small lift. We ascended to the third floor, where I found my two charming little rooms in the Lancaster Tower, with their view of the Long Walk and the Park, with its great oaks and groups of dappled deer.

The rooms were pink and white, and outside my bedroom was the largest white wardrobe I have ever seen; a lady's maid's elysium!

How pleasant it was to look down from the square tower windows, like any mediæval damsel of old, and watch the shadows lengthen into beauty in the Park, and then to look back at the gay little sitting-room with its bright chintzes, its painted furniture, and (in winter) the roaring coal fire in the big steel grate. Here I waited, with my eye on the clock, until it should be tea-time. There was no summons to tea. At the appointed hour I flew down the small staircase, and through a door which opened on to the Grand Corridor.

Here, on sunny mornings, down this splendid gallery, where the Lawrences hang above the cabinets of priceless china, secretaries and ministers hurry with their red despatch boxes for the King's Audience Room, while, beneath the windows, the Royal children mount their ponies for the ride in the Forest. This subtle blending here, through the centuries, of the public and private lives of the English sovereigns, gives to Windsor that atmosphere of splendour and of domesticity so peculiarly its own. For, without doubt, the Castle has a homely atmosphere. The harsh stamp of the Plantagenet is almost obliterated by the pleasant domesticities of the Georges.

During this first sojourn at the Castle, I always seemed to be walking. The distances to be covered are tremendous. I found, on a rough calculation, that it took me a quarter of an hour to reach the Green Drawing-room from my suite! I lost my way continually, until I noticed that exactly opposite the door in the Corridor by which I gained the little staircase to my rooms, there stood a glass case on a pedestal of bronze. Inside the case was General Gordon's Bible, its margins scored with remarks in blue pencil in his own handwriting. This, I thought, will be an excellent landmark! Ever afterwards, I found my exit from the Corridor by General Gordon's Bible!

One's first appearance in public at the Castle always causes a little trepidation, and as I hurried down the Grand Corridor to join the Household at tea, I felt distinctly nervous. My skirt trailed behind me on the rich carpet, and I carried a pair of long, white gloves in my hand.

On entering the Green Drawing-room I found two round tables, each with a huge, silver urn steaming merrily in the midst of a wonderful assortment of cakes and sandwiches. A friendly group was assembled round the tables and greeted me with kindly warmth. Tea was always an informal meal at Windsor, people strolling in at intervals, and departing without ceremony when they had finished. There was generally a golfing foursome who strolled in late. Most of the male members of the Household found time during the day for a game on the small links in the Park. The Royal Family were never present in the Green Drawing-room at tea-time. It was a purely Household function, and for such of the guests who were not bidden to the Royal table.

I slipped into a chair next Lady Minto, that charming and vivacious lady, and looked about me. How gigantic it all seemed after the typical London house from which I had just come! This great, stately room, with its cool, green damask walls, and gold and white ceiling somewhere miles over my head—full-length portraits of King Edward and Queen Alexandra in coronation robes hung upon the walls. Through the great windows, could be seen the formal Terrace gardens, and wide, green vistas of the Park. There was a subdued hum of conversation, desultory and informal talk, some chaff among the men, and the clatter of tea-cups. The golfers leant back in their chairs and smoked. Presently my sister Maid whispered to me, " Shall we go round the State rooms before dinner ? " I assented gladly, and we slipped away, pursued by the kindly banter of the Master of the Household, on our praiseworthy energy !

Windsor Castle is a treasure house of interest, and it is an immense privilege to wander, as we did that evening, through the great rooms with no glib tourist to break the dignity of their silence.

To reach the State Apartments from the Grand Corridor, one passes through a small gallery, the walls of which are closely covered with Holbein's coloured drawings of the English Royalties of his day. For all their exquisite draughtsmanship, these portraits always seemed to me the most unflattering statements of personality ! The heavy faces look squarely out over their stiff ruffs, full of that crafty purposefulness so typical of the Tudor.

We strolled through the vast spaces of St. George's Hall, and the Waterloo Chamber, and reached the Guard Room with its display of arms of all sorts. Here, in glass cases round the walls, are steel breast-plates incised with gold, chain mail fine enough to slip through a bracelet, and crested helmets with vizors of gold. In the silence, I imagined the far-off fields of honour, and heard the trumpets blow for ghostly tournaments ! Here, round the walls, is written a page of English history, in these emblems of its passions, its loyalties and its deaths !

In the great window rides a warrior, armour-clad, upon his armoured steed. This is the "King's Champion," who at ancient coronations threw the gage of battle to any who dared dispute the sovereignty of the newly-crowned. Treasures of all descriptions are stored in the Guard Room.

Some years after, I strolled here one evening with the late Sir Claude Macdonald, and he asked me to find for him the Union Jack which flew undisturbed over the British Legation in Pekin, during the long agonies of its siege in the Boxer Rising. Sir Claude, it will be remembered, was British Minister in Pekin at the time, and endured, with many others, the horrors of that beleaguerment. It took us some time to locate the little flag, but we found it at last, hanging in a corner, and, in the gathering darkness, Sir Claude stood under it once again, his fine, thin face raised in thoughtful contemplation. I was silent. The moment seemed to me dramatic! Around us, mediæval suits of armour gleamed, ghostlike, in the twilight, and away to the right, the gigantic figure of the "King's Champion" was etched black against the window.

Not far from the Guard Room we entered Queen Henrietta Maria's old ballroom, known as the Vandyke room. Its richly damasked walls are now crowded with magnificent pictures. Some years later, when I knew these treasures well, the Queen asked me to show this room to the present Duke of Portland, who cares so much for all things connected with the Stuart period. Pointing to the well-known three busts of King Charles I, upon one canvas, the Duke told me:

That pearl-drop in the King's ear is now one of the treasures of the Portland family. After Charles's execution, the pearl was taken from the decapitated head, and given to his daughter Mary, who married the Prince of Orange. It passed from her to her son, King William of England. The Duke's ancestor, William Bentinck, was his Gentleman of the Bed-chamber, and incidentally his greatest friend and confidant. He gave him this pearl, and it has been treasured in the family ever since. It is now very dark yellow from age.

The Duke added that they also possessed the Communion Cup from which the unfortunate King made his last communion on the scaffold before his execution. He told me many more interesting things about the Stuarts.

The Portlands were always at the Castle for Ascot week, and it was an unfailing pleasure to watch the Duchess's stately entrance into the Green Drawing-room before dinner, the huge, pink malmaisons she always wears nestling among the many ropes of her lovely pearls. But on this evening at Windsor, so long ago, I had not yet met this gracious couple.

Warned by the soft chimes of the Quadrangle clock, my companion and I were retracing our steps, when we came upon a glass case standing in a little bay, and filled with a varied assortment of coins, miniatures, lockets and keys. Facing me, as I peered cautiously through the glass, was a very large locket, and in it a lovely curl of golden-brown hair, the colour of over-ripe corn. It had a lustre and sheen, as if it had been newly cut from the head of a youthful angel! I bent to read the inscription, and was awe-struck when I realised that I was looking at a piece of hair cut from the head of that ill-fated and lovely lady, Mary Queen of Scots ! I bent closer. It was positively alive—as golden, as soft as a baby's—and it seemed to glimmer from that case of old trophies like a lovely, living thing in the midst of the dead !

When there were no guests at Windsor, but just Their Majesties and the Household, we dined altogether in what is usually known as the Breakfast-room, a Gothic-panelled room above the Sovereign's Entrance. Those were the evenings with Their Majesties that I loved most. The lights, subdued by the heavy panelling, were softer, talk was general round the oval table, the King and Queen expanded in an atmosphere entirely free from ceremony, and both showed how genial and charming they could be. The King would talk of sailing and shooting, now and then telling an amusing story, to which everyone was at liberty to listen and laugh. The King likes appreciation and a sympathetic atmosphere, and is quick to perceive both. Her Majesty, from her end of the table, smiled upon everyone, asked her ladies how they had spent the day, evincing interest in every detail of our experiences. In fact, we were a happy family.

When dinner was over, we filed out into the great beauty of the Grand Corridor, lit from end to end with softly shaded lights. No one who has ever seen it thus is likely to forget it ! The dignity of the proportions, and the beauty of the many furnishings ! Upon one side, the long row of its richly curtained windows, and upon the other the magnificent Lawrence portraits, Gainsborough's " Duchess of Devonshire " tossing her child, and many others. China cabinets, groups of Cosway miniatures, jewelled boxes in glass-topped tables, damask sofas, cabinets and consoles. Here we were at liberty to wander at will, and to stand about in pleasant groups. Their Majesties remained with us for some little time, strolling about, encouraging our interest in the pictures or miniatures, talking informally to us all before they retired to their apartments. We ladies then withdrew to our sitting-rooms, and the gentlemen strolled off with cigars to the Equerries' room—to gossip, one imagined, as much as we did!

It was our custom, when at Windsor, to assemble in the Grand Corridor after breakfast, to listen to the Guards Band, and to watch the ceremony of the changing of the Guard in the Quadrangle. Here the Queen and her children would often come, and we would stand or sit in the window-seats, while the few people who had permission to do so, would gather on the little pavement below (generally with children and dogs) to await this charming piece of ceremonial drill, so faultlessly executed. If, on any occasion, there was the slightest discrepancy in the thin red lines, it always evoked instantaneous comment from one or the other of the small princes, each as quick as any old Brigadier to spot a fault! They would arrive with their tall, sedate tutor, Mr. Hansell, and take up the most commanding position at the windows, entirely unconscious of the interest their appearance aroused among the small crowd in the quadrangle. Youthful Royalties are rarely self-conscious. They have always been stared at, and take it generally as a matter of course. With their sleekly brushed hair, and pink and white faces, they would jump up and down on the window-seats, nudging each other, chuckling, imparting happy

BALMORAL CASTLE, 1913.

I am afraid I broke up a game of romping tennis to secure this photograph.

Left to right :

H.R.H. PRINCE ALBERT (NOW DUKE OF YORK), MR. HANSELL (TUTOR), H.R.H. PRINCE GEORGE, H.R.H. PRINCE HENRY (NOW DUKE OF GLOUCESTER).

secrets, and asking innumerable questions, always gravely and conscientiously answered by Mr. Hansell.

Upon their happy conferences would break Princess Mary, with Mademoiselle Dussau in attendance. The young Princess and her brothers made their studies apart, so that every re-union of the young family during the day seemed quite an event, and always caused a happy commotion! Each would get quite flushed, in trying to impart his or her latest piece of news, before the other one could tell it! Everyone talked at once, till everyone laughed, and the grave tutor would call for silence, while he disentangled the threads of what everyone wanted to say! Meanwhile, the French governess would knit serenely at interminable stockings, glancing up now and then with a swift French reprimand, when the young voices grew too strident, or the laughter too feverish!

But on the arrival of the Queen, all commotion subsided and the children would gather quietly round her to watch the ceremony. It was very delightful upon sunny mornings, the old grey quadrangle full of the red uniforms, the gay strains of military music, and the faultless exhibition of that training which has become a tradition.

When it was over, a long morning of leisure stretched before us. Her Majesty was always occupied until luncheon time with her voluminous correspondence, and had no need of the services of the younger members of her Household. And so we played golf on the small links under the battlements. They made for us all a pleasant walk on sunny mornings. Sometimes, we strolled down to the little grey town, whose wealth of curiosity shops always makes it of interest. But on wet days my favourite haunt was the Castle Library, where a lovely oriel window overlooks the whole valley of the Thames. From here, may be seen mile upon mile of little villages, woods, cornfields and roads, all within the gracious curves of the great river. Eton College Chapel stands out very clearly.

I remember the year of Their Majesties' Coronation, the Eton boys had a wonderful firework display. Coloured Bengal lights were placed, at close intervals, all round the base of the chapel. When these flared, it stood out, clear in every architectural detail, like a little jewel in the summer darkness! We all stood on the terrace below this window, to watch.

On rainy days, ensconced in this deep window-seat, I would ask, humbly, to be shown the Leonardo or Michel Angelo drawings; and they would be brought to me in great portfolios, and laid across my knees, like a child's picture-book. It was pleasant to sit and browse, and study the exquisite traceries—Michel Angelo's preliminary studies for his statues—outlines of cherubs' heads by Leonardo, in faint, red crayon. Wonderful anatomical and scientific studies by the same great master, and once I came upon his sketch for a flying machine, not so very unlike our smaller aircraft of to-day.

The rain beat upon the grey battlements below, turning the cannons to an ebony blackness, whilst in here, a great fire glowed under a carved Elizabethan mantel, glinting on the mellow sheen of old volumes, and no sound but the regular tramp of the sentry upon the glistening battlements broke the comfortable stillness.

Some treasures of great historic interest are kept in the library. A shirt of Charles I, edged at neck and wrists with a quaint fringe of ribbons in various colours, some baby clothes which belonged to one of Queen Anne's many infants, illuminated missals from mediæval monasteries, and a wonderful old book of Queen Elizabeth's household accounts, one of the most amusing items in which is the amount of "ale" allowed to each of the Maids of Honour for breakfast! My memory fails me over the exact amount, but it was certainly something staggering to our weaker stomachs of to-day!

Mornings in the Windsor Library are always associated in my mind with the charming personality of the Librarian, Mr. Fortescue, author, student and philosopher. If one could find him, and persuade him to talk, one was assured of a thrilling and an interesting hour. Any subject he chose (and he had an enormous range) he illuminated with his brilliant imagination; historical situations came to life at his touch. Author of a prodigious work on military history, he also wrote those exquisite little fragments "The Drummer's Coat," and the "Life of a Red Deer." He lived in a charming little flat in the Norman Gatehouse.

I remember, one winter's evening, the late Lord Annaly and I had tea with him here, and a very delightful hour we spent in the cosy, lamp-lit, little sitting-room. I remember, too, our return in the winter darkness. We had reached the Norman Gateway, and were about to cross the quadrangle, when my companion discovered that he had left his cigarette case behind him. Leaving me in the shadows of the archway, he hurried back to fetch it.

I peered out. How ghostly the Castle looked, its frosty battlements faintly etched against the winter moonlight, how forbidding, how dark those shadows! To my straining eyes they seemed to move, and I was troubled with a queer sense of spiritual presences. In a flash, the Castle regained all its mediæval atmosphere! Grimly, out of those shadows, stalked the Plantagenets! I seemed to hear "Cœur de Lion's" bellowing laughter, and to see the shrunken, hunch-backed figure of King Richard against that wall! The quadrangle slowly filled with drunken soldiery. I sensed the license, the mad carousals, the ragged finery of a half-civilised Court!

A touch upon my arm, and the return of Lord Annaly dispelled the vision. We crossed the quadrangle in the frosty moonlight, and I no longer feared the shadows, but as we entered the Grand Corridor, with its softly shaded lights and scented warmth, I felt profoundly grateful to the many Royal owners, and the many architects, who have combined to make Windsor Castle the home of stately comfort it is to-day.

CHAPTER X

IN WAITING AT WINDSOR (II)

RECOLLECTIONS of summer weeks at Windsor Castle are connected in my mind with warmth and sunshine, much dust and glare, and the happiness of cheerful skies.

I suppose it sometimes *did* rain on us in summer, even in those halcyon pre-war days, but the human mind is a wonderful alchemist and, in retrospect, eliminates most unpleasant experiences. In the crucible of memory, the gold of our happy hours is apt to remain, and the more sombre ones, for the most part, mercifully fade away into the limbo of forgotten things.

For this reason, my memory records of Windsor the lovely shadows of its trees, the glimmering sheet of the river, cheering crowds in the Long Walk, the mounted police horses kicking up the white dust on Ascot roads, the green carpets, malmaisons and white walls of the Royal Box, Lord Lonsdale's yellow carriages, and many pleasant trivial things in summer weather.

So much water has passed under the bridges since those sunlit days, sombre, turgid water, roaring through the cataracts of the War, and carrying with it (so to speak) the bridges themselves, in the forms of old associations, customs and habits. In these later years, in which we painstakingly re-build that which has been so ruthlessly destroyed, it is pleasant sometimes to look back along the river, to the golden reaches of spacious and less troubled years.

It was on a June evening, that I arrived at Windsor for an Ascot "waiting." The King and Queen came down later after the Horse Show, and there was a quiet Household dinner. The following morning a Chapter of the Most Noble Order of the Garter took place in the Throne Room. To my great delight, I was told that we ladies were to be present in attendance upon the Queen, who, as a Sovereign member of the Order, took part in the ceremony.

At eleven o'clock, a little group of four of us assembled in the Waterloo Chamber; the Lady-in-waiting, the Woman-of-the-Bed-chamber, my sister Maid and myself. There was a great deal of bustling activity—officials and Clerks of the Order hurried to and fro, and every moment brilliant notes of pageantry lit the vast sombreness of the Chamber. Knights Companions were standing about, their long velvet cloaks spread out like peacocks' tails behind them; Military Knights of Windsor, with many medals, and cocked hats under their arms, made venerable groups.

With a golden crozier and a sweep of white lawn, the Prelate of the Order passed through, followed by the aged Dean of Windsor, the saintliness of his mien undimmed by increasing infirmity. Sir Douglas Dawson, the Secretary, with a flash of gold lace, hurried by, piloting four little Pages of Honour in scarlet coats and white ruffles. Their merry faces gazed curiously round at us, and their little swords clanked against the floor, as they scampered after their guide.

There was an atmosphere of bustling expectancy, invariable prelude to every Court function. By the doors stood the Heralds of Windsor and York, their armorially embroidered tabards two flaming notes of colour against the sombre panelling. At last, through the throng, who made way respectfully before the sweep of their velvet mantles, came the three Royal Knights of the Garter, the ex-King Manoel of Portugal, the Duke of Connaught, and his fair, débonair young son, Prince Arthur.

The Connaughts, both father and son, possess attractive manners, a blend of quite unconscious dignity with a great personal charm. They neither of them ever miss an opportunity for a gracious or friendly act, and now, catching sight of our little group, they stopped at once to greet us.

Prince Arthur was always merry on official occasions, and his gay humour could break the oppression of any public function. He laughed now, and rallied us on being the only ladies present in such a throng of men.

He had thrown his great blue cloak back over his shoulder as he talked, and I glanced down now at the velvet and jewelled garter twisted round his silk-clad knee; and then I met his eyes and smiled.

"Honi soit qui mal y pense," he said instantly, pointing an accusing finger. "You have a wicked thought!"

"No, sir," I said innocently. "I was only remembering the origin of the Order, which seems to make it appropriate that ladies *should* be present?"

He looked at me fixedly for a moment, and his eyes twinkled. "We will go into that later," he said. "She certainly *was* careless!" He shook his cloak forward again, acknowledged with great charm the courtly bow of the

Usher of the Black Rod, and hurried after his father and the Portuguese monarch who had already entered the Throne Room.

I shook my shoulders with something like relief. This interlude with a merry Royalty had, I felt, lightened proceedings. I had certainly been feeling a trifle overawed by the bustling grandeur of my surroundings.

Black Rod now advanced upon us like a moving note of pageantry, and advised us, with portentous gravity, to take our places in the Throne Room. We slipped in, and found four gold chairs placed for us near the door. The King and Queen, in their Garter Robes, were taking their places on the dais. The three Royal Knights stood at the head of the table, the little pages on the steps of the dais, and Garter King of Arms, resplendent in his velvet and emblazoned tabard, stood, like a statue of feudal days, near the door. No one else was present.

The Queen looked imposingly beautiful, in a dark blue dress of shimmering sequins, secured with a tasselled girdle of gold. Over it, her blue robe, embroidered with the Garter crest, hung in sumptuous folds. Her regal immobility was amazing.

There now followed the time-old ceremony of summoning the Knights to the Chapter, none of whom, with the exception of the Royalties, were yet present. The impressive silence, when all had reached their places, was broken by the King's voice. Looking at Garter, he said slowly and impressively, " Summon the Knights."

Garter turned instantly and rapped sharply on the high folding doors. His knock was answered from without by the Secretary of the Order, Sir Douglas Dawson. The doors were then flung wide, Garter stood back, and, preceded by the Secretary, the Usher of the Black Rod, the Prelate and the Chancellor, the Knights of the Garter entered, two by two.

With sweep of sapphire draperies, with plumed hats in their hands, the white ribbons on their shoulders securing their jewelled collars, the rich folds of their mantles flowing darkly round them, they swept in, and advanced slowly down the room. When they reached the end of the table, each couple paused and bowed deeply to the Sovereigns, and as they inclined their heads, Garter King of Arms proclaimed their names and titles in loud tones.

In quick rotation they followed each other, the heavy silence broken again and again by the proclamation of the greatest names in England. Lord Lansdowne, Lord Chesterfield and Lord Rosebery, the Dukes of Wellington, Northumberland and Portland, Lord Durham and Lord Crewe, and a small upright figure, whom I recognised instantly as Lord Roberts.

They had a proud sound, those names, I thought. They seemed to cleave the air with the superb incisiveness of some dramatic action, like a banner unfurled, or a sword drawn. Their very sound invoked all they stood for down the long line of English history, and seemed to impregnate the atmosphere with the sharp glitter of courage and renown.

The similarity of the blue mantle, enveloping each Knight, robbed him to some extent of individuality, but each was nevertheless enriched by its sumptuousness. It hid every deficiency of gait or person. Only the rustle and sweep of robes broke the pregnant silence after each proclamation.

When all had entered and found their seats, the doors were closed by the Heralds, and the Bishop of Winchester offered a prayer. Through his calm, passionless invocation of the Deity to bless this body of men, united in the highest Order of Chivalry in Europe, the Knights stood, immobilised, dark, still figures against the background of the panelled walls, where the Heralds leant in their brilliant tabards.

Against each velvet shoulder the knots of ribbon shone with startling purity. They looked like white roses. Did they symbolize, in old days, the purity of life necessary for the attainment of this Order? I do not know, but it seems probable. There was a quality of intense and dramatic significance in the silence which succeeded that prayer, as of some purpose definitely and perfectly fulfilled.

And it was borne in upon me that here to-day, within the precincts where it was first instituted, and through the beautiful significance of dress and ceremonial, worn and practised for over five hundred years, a Chapter of one of the oldest and highest Orders of Chivalry had been once more assembled. I realised that I was looking at an unforgetable scene, which should remain imprinted for ever, like an illuminated scroll, upon the tablets of memory.

For a minute no one moved or spoke, and five hundred and eighty years of English history brooded in that silence. Then the Sovereigns resumed their seats, and the Knights, with the soft rustling of robes, settled themselves back into their chairs.

It is curious that I can never remember what followed. For nearly an hour business connected with the Order was transacted, but of its exact significance I have no recollection whatever. Doubtless, it was of a purely formal or technical nature, and made no impression on the lay mind. But I do remember that the Chapter was closed again with prayer, and that there then followed a long, plumed procession of Knights, by way of the Norman Gateways and the Horse Shoe Cloisters, to St. George's Chapel, where a short service took place.

The route was lined on either side by troopers of the Royal Horse Guards, statuesque and shining figures in the sunlight. The Queen wore the black hat of the Order, with its high white plumes. At the conclusion of the Service the procession was re-formed, and returned to the Waterloo Chamber in the same order, after which Their Majesties gave a luncheon party in St. George's Hall.

The wives of some of the Knights were present at the luncheon. I remember the late Duchess of Wellington's stately figure; the pale, delicate face of Lady Lansdowne; and Lady Crewe, young and sumptuous. I sat at lunch between Lord Lansdowne and Lord Durham, whose tall, attractive sister, Lady Ann Lambton, was also present.

After lunch, to my great delight, Lord Roberts walked straight up to me. He had known my father well in Kabul-to-Kandahar days, and now he looked at me with piercing blue eyes, behind which was a flicker of friendliness as he held out his hand. "Are you really his daughter?" he said, and he spoke to me for a little of my father in the kindest way.

That afternoon, the sun blazed down on the Terrace Gardens, and on the soft and shadowy Park, where the tents of the Household Cavalry were springing up like beds of white flowers, in preparation for the great Review to be held by the King on Monday. Ninety-six of the officers were to dine at the Castle that evening, and I was much looking forward to the unique spectacle which I felt sure was in store for us.

And my expectations were in no wise disappointed. Long before the hour of the banquet, which was to take place in St. George's Hall, the officers began to arrive, passing into the Waterloo Chamber, slim and tall in their bright mess-jackets, brilliant figures against the high pictured walls.

Lord Grenfell and Lord Dundonald, commanding the first and second Lifeguards, Sir Evelyn Wood, commanding the Horse Guards, the Queen's two brothers, known in those days as the Duke of Teck and Prince Alexander (the late Lord Cambridge and Lord Athlone, Governor-General of South Africa from 1923–1930), and ninety-six officers of the three Regiments of Household Cavalry.

The Teck Princes, tall, good-looking men, were both in the Lifeguards. Hence their presence here this evening. Prince Alexander was very dark, with amused eyes like the Queen, the Duke was some years older than his brother, an extremely popular figure, known affectionately to his wide circle of friends as "Dolly Teck."

Lady Fortescue, Lady Mary Trefusis, my sister Maid and I, the only ladies present, stood near the door, looking down the brilliant room. The Lifeguards' band was stationed at its further end. By some mysterious and invisible means, it had become known to everyone present that they were to take their places at the banqueting table before the arrival of the King and Queen. And as the hour approached, groups of officers began to pass through the doorway into St. George's Hall.

We four solitary females, under the gallant escort of Lord Grenfell, followed suit, and found our scattered places down the long table, isolated figures in this vast concourse of men.

Each officer now stood to attention in his place. The high, bannered rafters, with their painted shields, soared into misty darkness above our heads, and a shining banqueting table, arranged for over a hundred, and decorated with historic gold plate between masses of crimson and yellow roses, ran, a blazing stretch of colour, the length of the vast hall. Between the two long lines of tall figures in their scarlet jackets, it stretched its brilliant length, looking like a fragment of the garden of the Hesperides.

Tall, branch candlesticks like golden trees with glittering fruit were placed at intervals between great golden bowls filled with lovely, dew-drenched roses, yellow and crimson alternately. The soft candlelight glimmered on their loveliness, and on the gold cutlery that outlined each place, and the long strips of white damask table-cloth.

At either end of the room, behind Their Majesties' chairs, two trumpeters of the Lifeguards and the Blues were stationed. They stood motionless, in their stiff cuirasses, bannered trumpets on their hips. Their statuesque figures were outlined against the vividly illuminated sideboards, piled high with a splendour of gold plate. I caught my breath at the magnificence of the scene, and knew it to be unforgetable.

It seemed wonderful that so vast a concourse of men should keep so still. No one moved or spoke. The lines of serving-men stood back motionless, against the walls. There was a moment of pregnant silence, and then the sonorous crash of the National Anthem from the Waterloo Chamber warned us of the approach of the Royal party. The generals and colonels and all the young subalterns stiffened themselves even more to attention, if such a thing were possible.

There was another second of silent expectancy, then at some unseen signal the trumpeters at either end of the table raised their trumpets with a flourish, and the high, clear notes of a fanfare of welcome proclaimed the entrance of the Sovereigns. The King, in Field Marshal's uniform, and the Queen in a marvellous mother-of pearl coloured gown, shimmering with diamonds; both wore the Ribbon of the Garter. They were accompanied by the Duchess of Teck and Princess Alice.

The banquet was long, but my neighbours on either side were pleasant, and the strains of the Lifeguards' band enlivened every interval. At its close, Their Majesties returned to the Waterloo Chamber, followed by the brilliant company, and there they remained for some time, conversing with the generals and commanding officers, eventually shaking hands with every officer in the room, each one presented by his respective colonel.

It was a very late hour before the Royal party finally withdrew, followed by an exhausted suite. After gracious good nights from Their Majesties in the Grand Corridor, I stumbled up my staircase to the cosiness and softly shaded lights of my little pink bedroom in the Lancaster Tower. Here a smiling maid received me.

The maid was smiling because, earlier in the evening she had been allowed to see the gold plate, massed high on the illuminated sideboards. I smiled, too, as she told me, for I could so well imagine her under the ægis of a friendly sergeant footman, gasping in amazement before that blazing splendour. What things she would have to relate in her little village on the remote Norfolk coast. She, too, had had a memorable evening, and would have something to dream about, I thought, as I fell asleep, high up in the old grey tower, under the moonlit battlements.

Early on Monday morning, the King received in audience Sir John French, and handed to him his Field-Marshal's baton. No doubt, as he left the Audience Chamber, on that sunny morning many years ago, Sir John felt he had reached the highest peak of military distinction, that no higher honour could be looked for. He was, of course, mistaken. Not so many years after, as Commander-in-Chief of the British Armies in the Field, he was qualifying to go down to posterity in the military annals of this country under a new name of tragic significance. A short time after the audience, the newly-made Field-Marshal, and future Lord Ypres, rode out with the King and his Generals to the Review of the Household Cavalry Brigade in Windsor Great Park.

The Queen, with Princess Mary, in an open carriage drawn by four greys, with outriders and postilions, met the King at the double gates. A procession was formed and proceeded to the Parade ground, a vast stretch of green sward. The day was very hot. There were many spectators from London and Windsor, and stands had been erected for them under trees. And here Lady Fortescue, my sister Maid and I found seats reserved for us, when we drove down from the Castle half an hour before the procession.

It was a beautiful sight, the squadrons drawn up in immovable lines of colour against the soft green background of the trees, the sun glittering on their breast-plates and plumed helmets. The crash of the massed bands in the National Anthem greeted the King as he rode on to the Parade ground.

There followed the inspection of the lines, and then the King joined the Queen's carriage at the saluting base, and the March Past began. The massed bands rode first in their State uniforms, headed by the bandmasters, and by three drummers, miracles of gold on milk-white horses, beating their silver kettle-drums with gestures of superb masterfulness.

Then followed the three regiments. Red coats and white plumes, blue coats and red plumes, trotting silently and easily over the grass to the pleasant jingling of accoutrements and soft champing of bits. Endlessly the lines seemed to pass, presenting a wonderfully symmetrical vision of noses and tails. Then came the gallop past by squadrons, to the stirring strains of "Bonnie Dundee," and the ground shook to the thunder of hoofs.

Finally, the dramatic moment of the charge. The troops disappeared over the grass into the far distance; then they turned, and, still keeping the wonderful symmetry of their lines, they charged down at full gallop upon the spectators, each man shouting at the top of his voice. As if by a miracle they pulled up within some distance of the stands, and, taking their time from the Brigadier, broke into three thunderous cheers.

The King then rode out and addressed them, Colonel Cook replying on behalf of the Brigade. The Royal Salute followed, and the King and his Generals rode off the Parade Ground amid the gay tumult of cheering summer crowds.

CHAPTER XI

IN WAITING AT WINDSOR (III)

THE great Race Meeting at Ascot might, I think, be aptly described as the highest social peak of the Season. For that week, even before the War, everyone sped out of the hot metropolis into the blossoming luxuriance of Home Counties in June.

A stream of vehicles plodded down the dusty roads, past the flowering chestnuts that dip into the river at Runnymede, through the trim, red-tiled villages, through gardens a blaze of summer flowers, by the green of luscious pastures where cows ruminate over clover with incurious eyes, through glimmering shadows of leaf-fringed lanes, past Windsor Castle, towering imperially above the town, and Cliveden, in high, embowering woods, until, within a twelve-mile radius of Ascot, country houses in their fragrant gardens and quiet Parks, opened hospitable doors to these town-weary folk. And old-fashioned English gardens in June, after long weeks in town, leave perfumed memories in the heart.

Massed flowers, in gay profusion against a rose-pink wall, where espaliered apricots trace delicate designs; circular rose gardens, down shallow grass steps, where ramblers hang in blazing festoons, and crescent rose beds encircle the old sun-dial in its tufts of lavender. Cool lawns, where fat thrushes pipe at dawn, and where, later in the day, drowsy games of croquet wage eternally, until the cedar tree shades the white tea-table, and shadows stretch in stencilled points across the grass. Square kitchen gardens, where clove pinks edge the paths, like white ribbons, and the jolly English vegetables grow to their prodigious size. Cabbages that could cradle a baby, cauliflowers like brides' bouquets, marrows as smooth and large as little pigs, and an old gardener, in a cheap straw hat, inveighing against creation with a Scotch accent. Currants and raspberries under brown nets, where eternally a bird flutters to escape; the gaiety of poppies in a shimmer of green; sunflowers over a hot wall, cherry trees in the grass, the old grey donkey tethered to a pole. . . .

All these things, after hot weeks in London, fall like the sacrament of benediction upon a tired brain.

It was heaven, after a long day's racing, to exchange fashionable clothes for loose country ones, to disport oneself on the smooth green lawns, or to lie idly in a hammock under high elm trees, until the evening dew distilled a myriad scents from the borders, and the tobacco flowers opened, star-white, in the summer dusk.

The King and Queen went down usually by car to Windsor Castle for that week, and here they entertained a number of guests, who drove over with Their Majesties to the Races in state landaus. It might be of interest to glance into the great drawing-rooms at Windsor Castle on the eve of the race meeting. Let us see if we can trace an outline or two, seize a salient colour, or recapture a mood in that brilliant mirage which was English Society before the European War.

The Green Drawing-room at Windsor was cool and high, and below the windows the terrace gardens, brilliant with summer flowers, lay basking in the late afternoon sunlight. Round the tables, talk was general, for all these people knew each other, and most of them were intimately associated in the social or diplomatic life of their day.

The sunlight, enriched by yellow blinds, lay softly about the room, and to the subdued rattling of tea-cups the general talk and repartee continued.

Here sat the Russian Ambassador and his wife, Count and Countess Benckendorff, he, tall and fine-drawn, with a curious, sheet-white face of many wrinkles, a man all greys and blacks, like a steel-point engraving; the Countess, with a gracious amplitude of figure, her face animated by her kindly eyes. At the further table Count Albert Mensdorff, the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador, so well-known in London's social life during three reigns, talked in an undertone to that *persona grata* at the Court and almost everywhere else, the Marquis de Soveral, familiarly nicknamed the "Blue Monkey!" Much might be written of this popular and well-known figure, whose decrees on looks, manners, dress, and feminine charms, held absolute sway in London society for a long period of years. If the "Blue Monkey" declared someone to be good-looking, she at once became a society beauty; if he thought her well-dressed, her clothes were described in the newspapers and copied by her less fortunate sisters; if he thought her charming, she passed as a wit! He certainly could not have owed his popularity to his looks, which his affectionate nickname very adequately described.

A Portuguese, he possessed that swarthy blueness of complexion not uncommon in natives of the Iberian Peninsula; a round, fat, bland face, with the soft dark eyes of his nation, eyes that could convey the subtlest implications, that could court, flatter, cajole, or tease in four or five different languages. Always perfectly groomed and wonderfully tailored, despite his short rotundity of figure, he possessed an essential elegance. A grandee to his finger tips, and for all his suave ways, full of a virility which endeared him to men as well as to women. For he could amuse men with an impartial graciousness, or flatter a woman, with an intensely personal charm. Intuitive to the highest degree, sympathetic and tactful, he was also the very best of *raconteurs*, with a sense of humour that amounted to a gift.

In Portugal he had been the life-long friend of the late King, that unfortunate monarch who was shot dead in an open carriage, sitting beside his wife, in the streets of his capital. I knew the British Minister in Lisbon at the time, and he related to me afterwards that on that ill-fated morning, before the terrible news had become known, he was summoned downstairs by a startled footman, who declared that the Marquis de Soveral had called, and had been taken suddenly ill in the "vestibule." Hurrying downstairs, the Minister found poor Soveral collapsed in a chair, sobbing and inarticulate. It was some moments before he could elucidate exactly what had happened, and by that time every bell, telegraph and messenger was spreading the news through a horrified city.

After a Republic had been finally declared, it was said that Soveral could never safely return to Portugal. Be that as it may, it is certain that in later years he was very content to make his home in England.

Further round the table sat the Italian Ambassador and his wife, the Marchese and Marchesa Imperiali. The Marchesa was tall and upstanding, large-boned for an Italian, with a handsome, high-coloured face. His Excellency, gay and amusing, and so typically Italian that his nationality positively blazed from him. Except in a film lover of Mexican extraction, I have never seen anyone so enterprising in that line of business as the Marchese. For him, it was quite impossible to sit next a woman with the smallest pretensions to youth or charm, without informing her of the fact in his halting English, accompanied by amorous and almost sulphurous glances, and many twirlings of his fine little moustache. South of the Alps this kind of language has its appropriate and well-recognised repartees, and it is an age-old game which amuses the Italians and at which they excel. But in England our devastating sense of humour killed it dead many years ago. Nowadays we prefer golf, and it would be impossible to keep a straight eye on the ball if one gave it so much exercise in other directions as did the Marchese. But, despite these small absurdities, his was a charming personality.

Of the English guests, the Portlands stand out clearest in my memory. The Duke, tall, upright, and very " grand seigneur " ; his Duchess tall, slight and willowy, still endowed, when I met her, with the nymphlike charm of a typically English figure, flat-chested, with lovely lengths of neck and limbs, a straight, finely chiselled nose, high cheekbones delicately flushed, and tranquil blue eyes set high in the long oval of her face. A pleasing and a lovely face, which still, in the mature dignity of her years, bore many traces of the beautiful girl who had bewitched the Duke at a railway station. She was then in her first season, and was quite unknown to the youthful Duke until, as the story goes, they encountered each other by chance at some railway terminus, each bound for the same country house party. It is said he was instantly fascinated by her youth and beauty, and promised on the spot to make her his wife. At the party, they were introduced for the first time, and in the intimacies of country house life, soon grew to know each other better! Not long after, the news of the engagement of the youthful Miss Dallas-Yorke to the greatest *parti* of the season broke upon an astonished world. Their mutual affection is a life-long romance to which the Duke bore public testimony only last year, when he celebrated his fifty years accession to the dukedom.

Next to the Duchess is Lord Crewe, a good-looking man, small-headed, elegant, with a curious Elizabethan flavour about him. Easy to imagine him in ruff and trunk hose, with short scarlet cloak over one shoulder. He would be as quick as any Raleigh to throw it for a Queen!

Lady Crewe sits opposite her husband. Lord Rosebery's daughter, fair, with a lovely matt skin, efflorescent and sumptuous, a hint of Circe and of Ceres here. Boucher, the French painter, would have admired and done full justice to her charms, I think. He would have posed her upon a white cloud in the purlieus of Olympus, with flushed cherubs whispering amorous secrets into her ear! But, besides a very decorative exterior, Lady Crewe possesses a brilliant mind, and is an authoress of no mean merit.

Next to Lady Crewe is old Lady Londonderry, wit and beauty of an earlier age; when I saw her at Windsor, already a little coarsened and weather beaten, but still possessed of a clear-cut, imperial profile. She always lacked height, and, in this instance, I remember one night, as we all wandered bedwards down the Grand Corridor, overhearing her remark to my sister Maid, who was divinely tall. "My dear," she said, "if I had had your height with my face and figure I should have ruled the world!"

We all laughed. It was gallantly said; but she was, before all things, gallant. What, I suppose, in these days of slang, would be known as a "sport."

This great old lady came into the green drawing-room every evening literally blazing with the Londonderry jewels. A crown of diamonds three inches high, like a princess's in a fairy tale, a stomacher entirely made of diamonds, large pear-shaped earrings, which almost touched the shoulder, and several necklaces and bracelets. A greater splendour of jewels it is almost impossible to imagine, and they look very lovely to-day on the present youthful-looking holder of the title, as she stands at the top of the grand staircase at Londonderry House, receiving her guests at her great political receptions.

And here are Lord and Lady Chesterfield. A handsome couple. He was Lord Steward, and he certainly looked the part. Carrying a white wand, his slim, upright figure, encased in gold lace, I have often seen him walking backwards before the Sovereigns, as they entered the ballroom at Buckingham Palace before a Court. And his walk, even reversed, was stately!

Lady Chesterfield certainly inherited her full share of the good looks of the well-known Wilson family. A warm brunette, with the brilliant colouring and eyes of her type, and with an athletic slenderness of figure.

Next to the slim beauty sits a man with a keen, pointed face, and blue eyes that always look amused. This is Lord Durham's sailor brother, the late Admiral Sir Hedworth Meux, and opposite sits his wife, formerly Lady Chelsea. It is difficult to realise that this lady, with her fluffy hair, childlike expression, and quaint little lisp, is the mother, by her first marriage, of no less than five pretty Cadogan daughters, four of whom, now married, form the racing quartette popularly known as "Cadogan Square." The fifth daughter, when still in the schoolroom, is said to have displayed much strength of character, and to have taken a vow not to marry into the peerage after three of her sisters had already done so. And she has, so far, kept that vow!

Lady Chelsea, as she was then, had one little son, rapturously welcomed after five girls. At the death of Lord Chelsea this child became heir to the Cadogan title and estates. Like his mother and sisters, he was intensely interested from his earliest years in all the events of the racing world. This was tragically instanced when, at the age of seven, succumbing to an operation for appendicitis, he demanded to be told, an hour before he died, who had won the Derby.

Lord and Lady Granard, two well-known figures at Court, sit next the Meuxs. He held the quaint title of "Master of the Horse" for some years. A very genial and popular person, with his very charming American wife. She was Miss Ogden Mills, one of the best-dressed women in English Society. I remember admiring the beautiful white aigrettes she used to wear in her hair. These were much in favour with smart women in those days, when nearly all heads were dressed alike. The prevailing coiffure was to rake the hair to the top of the head, where it was firmly twisted into a shape which resembled a French breakfast roll, and which was known as the *chignon*. Deep in the middle of this edible-looking erection the white or coloured aigrette was planted, standing straight up on end, and adding considerably to the height and dignity of the wearer.

The Windsor party was, as a rule, completed by the presence of one or two bachelors, generally of a certain age. Lord Revelstoke, Sir Charles Frederick, Lord Herbert Vane-Tempest. The latter was always a welcome addition to any party. With his tremendous spirits and wealth of humour, he was known to have caused laughter even in the most august. His tragic death, a few years later, in a railway accident, was an overwhelming blow to his many friends.

Such were the guests who sat round the tea-tables at Windsor, discussing the current topics of their day with more or less gay irrelevance. The talk centred at first on the prospects for the next day's racing, and Sir Hedworth Meux and old Lady Londonderry had many half-whispered jokes over their respective chances.

Then the talk veered to the Review of the Household Cavalry, which had taken place in Windsor Great Park that afternoon, and at which a good many had been present.

Someone spoke of the congestion of the streets near Victoria by the crowds watching the funeral procession of the suffragette who had tried to stop the Derby! With nearly everyone in the room I had witnessed that tragic and misguided effort, as I was standing behind the King in the Royal Box at Epsom when it happened. The horses were coming up the straight towards the winning post, the woman ran out under the arms of the police and made straight for the galloping phalanx. How she escaped being knocked down by the first horse remains a mystery! She sprang at the King's as it passed, and managed to throw both arms round the neck of the startled animal! Horse, jockey and woman came down in an indescribable heap! What followed was mercifully hidden from us by the crowds.

Even the genial face of the Master of the Household darkened over this tragic incident. He said that in his long experience he had never seen the King so angry or so much upset!

We all, I think, should have felt less bitter over this horror could we have foreseen the splendid mantle of courage and self-sacrifice with which the women of England were to cover up these tragic memories in the War so closely upon us. But it was still a year before Sarajevo! And no faintest shadow of coming disaster darkened those gay tea-tables. When the meal was over we dispersed slowly, with merry interchanges, our minds filled only with happy anticipations of the week's racing ahead of us in that splendid June weather.

CHAPTER XII

IN WAITING AT BALMORAL (I)

TO a lover of Scotland nothing could be more enchanting than the typical hills and vales that surround the Scottish home of Their Majesties.

For miles around Balmoral Castle the moors stretch their purple and russet carpets, and the soft Aberdeenshire hills tumble along the horizon into the misty distances. A very few minutes walk from the Castle will find one knee-deep in ferns and heather, with here and there little amber-coloured burns tossing themselves over boulders in musical ripples.

Therefore, as a lover of Scotland, as well as for other considerations, my first summons to join Their Majesties at Balmoral filled me with pleasant anticipations.

As my train drew into the station of Ballater, after the fatiguing night journey, I breathed in gratefully that sparkling air with the tang of the Highlands in it. A car from Balmoral was waiting, and bore me swiftly to my destination, and as it rounded the trees of the approach, Balmoral Castle was disclosed to me for the first time.

Scores of such residences, rather less imposing than this one, are scattered widely over Scotland, wherever the beauty of the scenery inspired our Victorian grandfathers to build a home. They were, I suppose, considered appropriate to the wild country and the still wilder Highlander. They appear to us, in these days, as early Victorian dreams of

Norman baronial strongholds. Balmoral Castle, certainly, caught the prevailing note. It has an overwhelming number of little white, pointed towers like pencils, some castellations, and a vast number of long narrow windows. A fine carriage drive sweeps up to the entrance porch of white stone.

In Lady Augusta Stanley's charming letters she gives us a description of the arrival of the Royal owners in their new home for the first time:

> "A little before seven, the joyous cry of welcome was heard, and they (Queen Victoria, the Prince Consort, and their family) drove up, smothered in turbans and blue veils. The Prince made old François throw his shoe into the house for luck, and they soon all vanished into the recesses of the new house."

One can imagine their delight in it all; the Queen and her daughters, discarding their blue veils, passing from room to room admiring all the touches of *couleur locale* so painstakingly introduced. The Queen's own apartments, with wide windows towards Invercauld and the windings of the River Dee, the huge Gothic ballroom, where the reels were to be danced, the drawing-room with its admirably designed groups of Highlanders holding the lights, the ornaments, the trophies of all sorts, antlers, chintzes of thistle and tartan, heather wherever there was anything to hold it, tartan wherever there was anything to cover! Everything that possessed the smallest touch of local colour, the Queen admired and placed about these rooms.

There can be no quainter instance of her love for Scotland than the fact that she insisted on having the teeth of its fauna as ornaments in her rooms! The strangest collection of stag's teeth, mounted in geometrical designs, were found in a glass-topped table, with cairngorm brooches, little stones picked up at happy picnics, endless small trophies kept and treasured by this great old Queen.

There is no doubt that this house, and the life she was able to lead here, stirred the ineradicable child in Victoria, the side of her that loved picnics and ponies, and long days in the open, and the oddities of national dress; that was never wholly suppressed, even by the sterner aspects of the Prince Consort. The eager child who danced all night in London and then took her friends up on to the roof of Buckingham Palace to see the sun rise, lived here again in her happy northern home, and was only finally extinguished by the long crushing burden of her widowhood.

Their present Majesties, with great delicacy of feeling, have allowed Balmoral Castle to remain much as Queen Victoria left it, a living memorial of her age and taste.

Prepared as I was in some degree for these surroundings, the bedroom, to which I was at once conducted on my arrival before luncheon, astonished me not a little. Indeed, as the door opened, I paused upon the threshold and blinked. The curtains and the valance of the big bed blazed with Royal Stuart tartan in shiny chintz! The arm-chair and sofa were covered with what is called, I believe, "dress Stuart poplin." This was enough, in all conscience, to brighten any room, but even the carpet here had caught the fever, and reproduced faithfully the "Hunting Green Stuart." Would the fire blaze in Scotch patterns, I wondered?

Around the walls, the childhood and adolescence of the Prince Consort could be studied in a set of engravings in heavy, bog-oak frames.

But for all that, the room held an atmosphere of solid comfort which appealed to my tired senses. A roaring fire burned in the steel grate, the bed looked luxuriously comfortable, and from the big, half-opened windows came the vibrant air which, in Scotland, makes one want to stand on tip-toe.

So often in these old-fashioned rooms, relics of an age which we all now agree had plenty of taste, and all of it bad, there is an atmosphere of cheeriness and gaiety, a feeling of welcome, which modern bedrooms, with silvered walls and angular furniture, entirely fail to convey. To produce startling effects one must often sacrifice comfort, and an arm-chair with a cocktail case concealed in its back cannot look its genuine, comfortable self! No such guilty secrets spoil the outlines of Balmoral chairs, and I sank gratefully into mine, despite its blazing tartan! After hasty ablutions, and a change into tweeds, I felt much refreshed, and sallied forth into the corridor to find my way downstairs.

And here, the first person I encountered, also making for the stairs, was a bland and elderly gentleman, with a Pickwickian figure, who seemed entirely appropriate to this Victorian background. He wore a sporting waistcoat, but the rest of his attire was very trig, and suggested Sloane Street on a Spring morning! Spanning the sporting waistcoat was a large gold watchchain.

I suppose I looked uncertain of my way, for he stopped and smiled at me in the friendliest way, and held out a very white hand.

"Aren't you the new Maid of Honour?" he said. "Come along with me, and I will show you the way downstairs." Then, as we shook hands. "You have very cold hands, young lady," he said, "very cold hands!" And he shook his fine white head at me with a gay, reproachful smile.

Who was this bland and charming person? I thought, but was too shy to ask. Later on, I discovered that he was the eminent doctor, Sir Francis Laking, who was for so many years medical adviser to the Royal family. If one had been looking for a Court Physician to play upon a stage, it would have been impossible to find anyone so entirely typical and appropriate.

Under his friendly guidance I made my way to the morning-room, where we were to assemble before luncheon. I was told that at Balmoral the King and Queen lunched as well as dined with their Households.

Here, in this cheerful room, full of Victorian curiosities, but with wide windows to the hills, I found the Castle party assembled.

Lady Katherine Coke, the Queen's oldest and most loved lady, came towards me with all that inimitable charm which makes her, to-day, a beloved memory in so many hearts. She took my hand in her frail ones. "My dear," she said and smiled, and I shed straightway every atom of nervousness. She drew me to the fire.

"Let me see," she said, "do you know Lord Rosebery?"

and I found myself shaking hands with the great Statesman, a very upright figure in those days, before the long sad years of his illness had laid their crippling hands upon him.

There were seven or eight other people in the room. Their faces rise up before me, with startling distinctness out of the past. The late Sir Charles Mathews, then the Public Prosecutor, a little man with a curious, clever legal face; Mr. Augustine Birrell, with his shock of curly, grey hair and round spectacles; that upright, genial Admiral, who has so much personal charm, Sir Colin Keppel, and his pretty wife; the frail figure and delicate face of Lord Carnock, known to us in those days as Sir Arthur Nicolson; and Colonel Watson, then military secretary to the Sirdar of Egypt, whom I had met before at Windsor, and who came forward now with charming friendliness. We talked a little before the fire.

"Who is that tall man by the window?" I asked him presently.

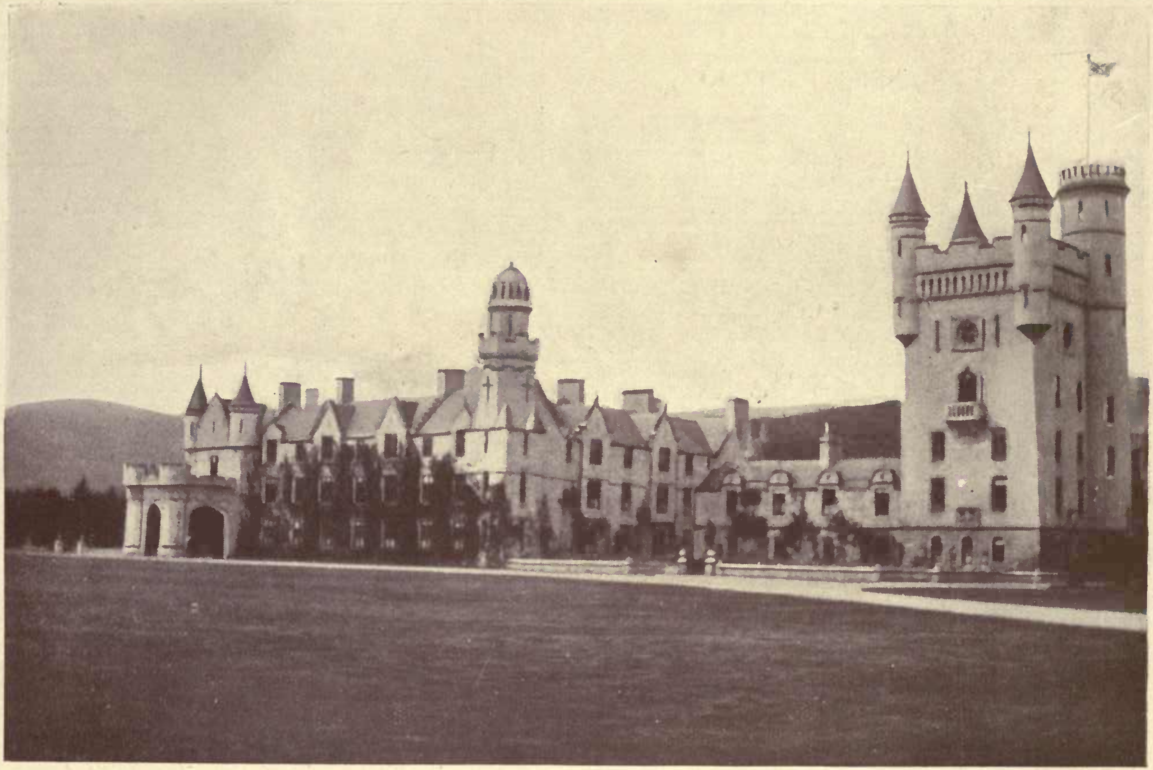
Colonel Watson smiled. "Don't you know the Sirdar?" he asked. "Come along with me and I will introduce you."

I followed him across the room; the tall figure at the window turned, and I found myself shaking hands with Lord Kitchener. Before either of us could speak, Sir Derek Keppel came hurrying in, and said simply, "Their Majesties."

In the doorway stood the King in Highland dress, the Queen in one of the light-coloured friezes she always wears in Scotland, Princess Mary, flaxen-haired and bright-eyed, and the two younger Princes, Henry and George, also in Highland dress, complete with dirks and sporans. Everyone turned towards the Royal party, and made slight obeisances. Their Majesties smiled graciously, including everyone, and we proceeded in to luncheon. There were two big round tables. I found myself between the two little Princes, whom I had already met at Windsor. They were shy to begin with, but soon expanded, and we talked merrily about summer days there, when I rode with them in the mornings, and we all three galloped in the Park, pursued by an elderly and rather nervous groom. Prince George told me that Princess Mary drove a phaeton.

Often at Balmoral on free afternoons, Princess Mary would drive herself out in this high phaeton, with a pair of smart chestnut horses. I have seen her many times bowling along the roads near the Castle, sitting very high in the driving seat, her golden hair flying in the wind, her fair young face radiant with happiness, an old groom sitting beside her, and her governess, Mademoiselle Dussau, on the back seat. The Princess drove well, and was devoted to her horses. Indeed, she and her brothers have a great love for all animals. The Princess had for many years a liver-coloured Italian greyhound, whom she adored. It was a lovely little thing, with spindle legs and large brown chocolate eyes. It always had its basket in the most sheltered corner of the schoolroom, for it was very delicate, and succumbed at last to the rigours of an English winter.

When luncheon was over, I was told that I was to drive with the Queen to the Falls of Garawalt, and that we should have tea there. Punctually at the hour the carriages were ordered, I appeared in the big hall, which is panelled in some light wood, and hung with many antlers. Her Majesty



BALMORAL CASTLE.

never keeps anyone waiting, and she shortly appeared most sensibly dressed with a short, frieze skirt, neatly gaitered ankles, and a businesslike walking stick. She made some laughing remark to me, and we went out to the carriages. These, I found, consisted of two wagonettes of the type known as a "lonsdale." The occupants sit facing each other, their knees almost touching; not a very comfortable mode of progression, as one must inevitably crane sideways to see the scenery. Her Majesty entered the first one with Lord Rosebery, Mr. Birrell, and myself. Lady Katherine Coke (who, despite her years, was never daunted by any expedition, however arduous), Sir Arthur Nicolson, and two other men got into the second, and we started. I am never likely to forget that drive! Lord Rosebery and Mr. Birrell, stimulated by the presence of the Queen, put forth their best efforts to interest and amuse her, and when two men of such intellectual calibre, and with so wide a range of human experience, really lay themselves out to interest and amuse, their efforts are likely to be successful.

They capped each other's stories, laughing like schoolboys, started arguments over nothing, defending impossible positions with the greatest brilliance. Mr. Birrell, his round, shrewd eyes sparkling behind his glasses, appeared to be enjoying himself hugely; and Lord Rosebery, with his curiously pink face and heavy-lidded eyes, became unusually animated. The scenery received scant attention, I am afraid, until our arrival at the Falls.

Well worth a visit they proved to be. The delicious, tumbling water fell over great boulders from an immense height, into groves of tall and lovely trees. We wandered about at will, some of us taking photographs, while others went off for short walks. I sat with Sir Arthur Nicolson on a log, and threw stones into the lovely, amber-coloured water.

A few paces from here is a stalker's cottage, and a little later we all forgathered here for tea. It was an amusing experience! The small living-room of the cottage, its walls covered with the actual stuff of the Hunting Stuart tartan, the square table, with its bunch of heather and its checked cloth, to which we all sat up, like children at a party, in straight-backed, windsor chairs. The Queen, establishing herself behind a capacious tea-pot, poured out tea for us, in big, white cups. Outside the lattice window nothing could be seen but a few Scotch firs, and mile upon mile of heather. The little room smelt sweetly of it, and of the tartan stuff upon the walls, and there was a delicious sound of water tumbling over stones. Mr. Birrell drank three cups of tea!

Presently there was a sound of voices, and a tall figure blocked the entrance. We all looked round. Lord Kitchener stood in the little doorway, stooping to look in at us, bare-headed, and smiling at the Queen.

"May we come in, Ma'am?" he asked.

"Certainly," said Her Majesty. "But, oh" (with a little ripple of laughter), "there are no more cups!"

Mr. Birrell offered to wash out his, which caused much merriment, but eventually a servant was sent for, and two more cups were procured.

Lord Kitchener bent his tall figure and entered, followed by Colonel James Watson, a curious contrast in physique!

The immense figure of the Sirdar seemed to fill the little room! We all pushed our windsor chairs closer together, to make room for them at the table, but Lord K. decreed that, as they were late comers, they should have their tea on the black horsehair sofa in the corner.

"It won't bear you," said Lord Rosebery with complacence.

The Sirdar eyed it with the measuring glance of the great campaigner. "I think so," he said deliberately, and, placing his tea-cup on the floor, he lowered himself with great caution on to its comfortless surface, whilst Colonel Watson perched himself upon its arm. From the solid security of their windsor chairs, Lord Rosebery and Mr. Birrell watched these proceedings avidly, like naughty school boys! And it was impossible not to realise that they were hoping the sofa would collapse beneath the form of the great warrior!

All this amused the Queen, and we were a merry party!

When at last we came out of the cottage, pink clouds were riding the sky, casting rosy veils over the heather, and the immaculate stillness of the sunset hour brooded upon all things.

We paused to look at the great moorlands tumbling away under an opalescent sky, to the utmost golden rim of the horizon.

"Beyond their utmost purple rim the happy Princess followed him," murmured Sir Arthur Nicolson. The Sirdar, still bare-headed, was gazing into the sunset. I watched him. This great man, I thought, who has made so much of life and has still so much to make, what are his thoughts, as he looks up into an evening sky such as this? Can the beauties of nature reach him through his vast preoccupations? Can its peace touch the restlessness of his mind?

Few could judge Lord Kitchener's thoughts from his expression. It had a sphinx-like quality. His strangely narrow blue eyes gazed into the sunset at Garawalt, with a stillness, an aloofness, equal to its own!

It was twilight when we reached the Castle.

CHAPTER XIII

IN WAITING AT BALMORAL (II)

ON the evening of my arrival at Balmoral Castle, I dressed for dinner, with a happy sense that I was going to enjoy my first experience of " Waiting " in Scotland.

I stood in front of a long glass, and my maid deftly slipped over my head one of those expensive dreams of Monsieur Reville. He had dreamt, upon this occasion, of ripe corn and silvery oats, and had powdered them with the diamonds of dew. The result made an exquisite creation, fully worthy of his great house.

How well the diamond cipher of my office looked against it, I thought, as I pinned it to my left shoulder. It was an arrangement of the letters " M " and " R," in a circlet of diamonds, surmounted by a Royal crown. The diamonds were very brilliant, showing little of their thin platinum setting. It was worn with a bow of Teck red ribbon, Her Majesty's family colour.

The large drawing-room looked very bright, as I entered it some moments later. Guests and Household stood about in friendly groups, or warmed themselves by the fire. I caught sight of two notable additions to the Castle party, in the persons of Lord Curzon of Kedleston and Mr. Bonar Law.

On the entrance of the Royal family, some moments later, I saw Prince Albert (the present Duke of York) standing behind the King. I found myself placed beside him at dinner. He was a charming, unaffected boy of about fifteen, and looked well in his Highland evening dress. A slight stammer made him a little shy in public, but he always made heroic efforts to overcome both disabilities. Possessing two younger brothers of my own, boys of that age were no problem to me, and we were soon talking easily enough, until the Prince was monopolised by his other neighbour.

Then I turned, at the sound of an authoritative voice, and found Lord Curzon sitting upon my other side. He was discoursing to all within ear-shot, and I set myself to listen in respectful silence, as did all in the immediate vicinity of the great Pro-Consul. Indeed, I was very well content to be a humble member of his audience. Lord Curzon kept so far above the personal element in conversation, that it would have been extremely difficult for a stranger, and a young and unsophisticated one, to form any conversational contact. Like a placid and dignified eagle, he soared above the commonplace, his mind always avid for the wider spaces of thought and feeling.

He would lean back in his chair, one hand clenched on the table, his eyes running hungrily round all who were within reach of his tremendous periods. When he had collected them, so to speak, into one focus of interest, he would lean slowly forward, his face would flush, and with clenched fist striking softly at the table, he would proclaim his thoughts.

Gradually, his eyes blazed, he became eloquent, persuasive, magnetic, his powers of expression always equal to the wealth and weight of his perceptions ; whilst in and out of the dense forest of his ideas (like fawns and satyrs at play !) ran his strong yet subtle sense of humour.

I have, alas ! no recollection of the topic which engaged his attention on that particular evening, but I do remember how a weighty sentence was suddenly suspended by the harsh interruption of an unearthly noise, proceeding, so it seemed to me, from outside the service entrance.

" They are blowing up," said Prince Albert, calmly.

I was startled. " Blowing up what, sir ? " I asked.

But, at that moment, all further speech became an impossibility, as six of the King's Pipers, marching in quick time, and in the gaudy regalia of the Royal Stuart tartan, entered, with bagpipes in the full blast of the " Cock of the North."

Those who have never heard seven or eight bagpipes played in an enclosed space, can form no idea of the tremendous shock they are likely to convey to auditory nerves unused to their vibrations. It is impossible to listen to the pipes, as one does to music. One either dislikes them as an intolerable noise, or they flood the senses with a curious feeling of exhilaration. And that is all there is to them for the average Lowlander. But there is no doubt, that the Scotsman is conscious of tone, variations, rendering, and quality in their playing, quite beyond the comprehension of an Englishman.

Kilts and ribbons swaying in the inimitable Highland swagger, they marched round the table three times, tall men holding themselves magnificently, and headed by the King's special piper, who walked alone at their head. One shoulder slightly raised, they held their bags in the crook of the arm, as a lover his mistress, with tender strength and masterful possession. After the third encircling movement, they swept out of the service door, leaving an almost stunned silence round the table.

Lord Curzon leant back in his chair, and cracked a walnut, with a ruminating air. He vouchsafed no further opinions, and soon afterwards the Queen rose, and, with the Royal children, left the room followed by the ladies, who curtsied to the King as they passed his chair. He stood by the table, smiling, acknowledging their obeisances with a pleasant little nod.

The drawing-room was full of light and colour when we returned to it. Bright chair covers, and light woodwork, and a big fire glinting on the bizarre ornaments, and the silver locks and door handles, it seemed a cheerful place. A sofa stood near the fire, and upon this the Queen established herself, and started work upon an exquisite pale pink cot-cover. She called up Lady Keppel to talk to her.

The younger Princes were sent to bed. Prince Albert suggested a game of "Coon Can," and some of us settled quietly down to it in a corner.

There was a high wind and rain outside, but no sound of it penetrated the closely-shuttered windows. The hour held a very peaceful charm. The ladies talked softly to each other, moving soundlessly over the thick carpet. Somewhere a clock struck the quarters in silvery chimes, the fire crackled. It was quiet and warm. There was a faint scent of pot-pourri. I thought of the bleak moorlands outside, lonely glens and valleys, swept by the shrewd, autumnal blasts, and a pleasant sense of home and comfort possessed me.

Just as the third game of "Coon Can" was coming to an end, the high folding doors opened, and the King stood upon the threshold, with all the gentlemen at his back. He came slowly into the room, and we all rose.

Lady Katherine Coke turned to me.

"You know, don't you?" she said, "that as each of the ladies leaves the room, she must turn round at the door, and make a curtsey."

"What? Each one all by herself!" I asked, dismayed.

Lady Katherine nodded.

This was a great ordeal, I thought! In the dining-room, the ladies had passed the King's chair, more or less together, but here, with these spaces of lonely parquet round the door, and with no support at all, how was one to make a graceful exit?

Lady Katherine was inexorable. "Wait until the King looks in your direction, my dear," she said. "You must not leave the room when he is not looking."

It certainly was something of an ordeal to make a solitary curtsey in those days of narrow dresses, with no accessories of train or bouquet. Court life in earlier ages had many advantages, I reflected. The Elizabethan lady, making her obeisance to her sovereign, sank into gold or silver hoops, the early Georgian into brocaded panniers, but we poor ladies of the present day had really nothing to sink into but our bones!

However, it had to be faced, and I only prayed that I might not slip up on the parquet.

It was not long before Her Majesty gave the signal for retiring, and the ladies moved towards the door. The King, deep in conversation with Lord Curzon, looked up from time to time to acknowledge their obeisances. My turn came at last. I stood on the parquet, just inside the door, in my narrow, yellow frock, and looked towards the King. His Majesty's back was half-turned, and, remembering Lady Katherine's injunction, I waited, trembling a little at the ordeal!

It seemed to me that the lights grew more intense, that everybody must be staring! Would His Majesty never turn? It was, in all probability, no more than a minute that I stood there, but to me it seemed an eternity of shyness! At last, there was a pause in their conversation, and the King looked over his shoulder. On the instant, I sank to the ground and fled! In the corridor outside, the ladies laughed merrily at my gasps of relief! Habit has a magic of its own. After two or three evenings I thought no more of this ordeal than of the curtsies in the dining-room.

. . . .

The next day dawned with the crystal clearness of an autumn morning in Scotland. Outside my bedroom window, the oaks, already touched with gold, seemed to hold the limpid sunshine on their leaves, and the faint silver sheen of a water frost lay on the smooth lawns. So still it was, that the occasional fall of a stiff leaf caused a definite break in the silence.

Breakfast was a cheery meal, shared by Household and guests, in the long dining-room. Some of the men, who were shooting with the King, ate hastily and departed. The others lingered and smoked, discussing the news.

After breakfast, I went to Lady Katherine's small sitting-room, and sat with her, while she arranged the letters in her basket for the Queen. Presently, the little bell over the door would ring, a signal that she was required in Her Majesty's sitting-room to deal with the morning's mail.

"So many letters, this morning," she said, "and some of them so funny!"

She sat at her table, opening the envelopes, quickly and deftly, her little grey head bent over her task.

"Here is an old lady, advising a particular kind of mustard plaster for a cold, and begging the Queen to try it!"

I laughed. "There should be no posts in Scotland," I said, my eyes on a group of fir trees, etched black against the faint blue hills.

There was a silence, broken only by the faint crackle of torn envelopes.

Suddenly, Lady Katherine's dark, merry eyes looked across at me. "Here is another old lady, who says that the best cure for indigestion is to roll a small cannon ball round and round the diaphragm after meals, lying flat on the ground. She wants the Queen to be sure to tell the King about it." And she gave her ripple of laughter which sounded so young!

"Sometimes," she continued, "the letters from children are sweet, and often pathetic. They nearly always begin, 'Dear Queen,' and end 'Yours affectionately!' And sometimes there is a little pressed flower inside. They are always answered, and it means so much to them."

At that moment the door opened, and a tall sergeant footman came in to announce that Her Majesty required my presence in the ballroom. Leaving Lady Katherine still bent over her task, I hurried along the corridors. Long before I reached the immense Gothic room I heard the strains of the pipes. In the ballroom I found a piper playing on the dais, and in the middle of the floor, Her Majesty, Princess Mary, and the two little Princes, busily dancing through the intricacies of the eightsome reel. The numbers were completed by the French governess, Mademoiselle Dussau, and by three very trim little housemaids, each in a neat, black frock, and with a minute piece of lace on her head, known, I believe, in the profession, as a cap!

All three were rather flushed and nervous, but obviously delighted at the honour of practising the figure with the Queen. Their shy smiles at the energetic caperings of the little Princes were charming. They must have been Scotch girls, for they knew every step of the dance, and had probably been chosen for that reason.

Forsythe, the King's piper, hovered on the outskirts of the figure, directing the dancers, and keeping time with a foot tapping on the parquet.

Prince George was thoroughly in his element! A little uncertain of his steps, he yet put such Highland fervour and fling into his movements, that they did not seem to matter. His happy little face was wreathed in smiles. Indeed, the Royal family seemed to be enjoying itself!

At the end of the figure, there was a hard-breathing silence! Everyone was a little out of breath, except the piper! No one, I imagine, has ever seen a breathless piper! They seem to have an endless store of that commodity! The Lowlander is apt to wish, sometimes, that they had less!

I now thought it was time for me to make my presence known, and so I advanced towards the Royal group, over the endless wastes of parquet floor.

"Just in time," said Prince George. "We are going to dance the 'Circassian Circle'."

The Queen smiled, and telling me to take her place, Her Majesty left the ballroom, the tall footman holding open the doors, and the pipers standing rigidly to attention as she left.

"Now, we must begin again," said Prince Henry.

Forsythe arranged our positions for the "Circassian Circle." The piper breathed into his pipes, and the great room was once more filled with Highland melody.

Off we whirled to the inspiring tune, revolving, tiptoeing, waltzing, prisoners in the mêlée of the dance! Clasping hands in re-union, losing each other, meeting again, all of us experiencing in varying degrees that strange and exquisite happiness that comes from harmonious and concerted movement.

When it was at last finished, the governess opened one of the windows, and we stood on its threshold, our flushed faces raised to feel the light and vibrant air. We breathed it in gratefully. It had a delicious scent of pine woods, of wet mould, and autumn bonfires. Opposite the windows, a golden belt of undergrowth gleamed in the brilliant sunlight; in the far distance we heard the sound of the King's guns.

One more dance, Mademoiselle Dussau decreed, and then the children must go out.

With renewed energy, we laboured through the "Veleta," and then the pipes were packed away; Princess Mary, with youthful graciousness, thanked the pipers for their services, and the children, accompanied by Mademoiselle Dussau, left the ballroom.

That afternoon, I took a five-mile walk over the heather, with Sir John Simon, who was staying at the Castle. The limpid sunshine still lay, like a benediction, upon the moorlands. In the crystal-clear atmosphere we could hear, all round us, the little burns, deep in the heather, racing over the boulders. We rested for a while, I in the heather, Sir John, his hat off, his foot upon a rock, leaning forward, gazing into the sombre blue distances with curious, far-seeing eyes.

I watched his fine, ascetic profile as he talked, noting the strength of the long jaw, the wide sweep of the forehead, the sensitive precision and extreme ability in the face. And I thought to myself: "Here is a great personality and a great thinker!" And I picked the heather in silence, and let him talk.

Who does not enjoy a silent listener? Young as I was, I knew Sir John enjoyed that walk, thinking his long thoughts aloud on that afternoon of sunshiny warmth.

We returned at tea-time in the sunset. And tea in Lady Katherine's little sitting-room by the fire was pleasant after so much exercise.

The day ended with the King's dance for the ghillies on the Balmoral and Abergeldie estates.

They came with their wives and daughters, and the ballroom, for all its size, was crowded.

His Majesty, with Princess Beatrice, sat on the dais, but most of the other Royalties took part in the dancing. We ladies wore gaudy silk sashes of the Royal Stuart tartan, across our dresses, from shoulder to hip. There were Eightsomes, Foursomes, Circassian Circles, and Veletas, and an extremely arduous dance known as the "Flirtation Polka." In this, one started with the partner of one's choice, whirling round in the rapid and jocose way that Polka time induces; then the band stopped dead, and when it started again, one resumed with whoever happened to be nearest on the floor, but never with the same partner! This led to a great deal of merriment and confusion, much giggling, and half-amorous plotting and subterfuge! We all worked through it with surprising zest; my fate led me from the arms of an immense sergeant footman to those of a surprisingly squat little ghillie! I remember no intermediate stages! Everyone laughed and was happy. There was an atmosphere of whole-hearted enjoyment. These simple folk from the glens and hills have the gaiety of children, and are not at all overawed by the intimate presence of Royalty, for they are accustomed to it. They behave, always, with the natural good taste of those whose closeness to nature makes them simple-hearted and kind.

For them the King is, before all things, the laird of their much-loved hills and glens; the Prince of the Bonnet and the Tartan, of the long days in the open, of the hunt, and of the kill. He is the lord of their hearthstones, of their solid roofs, and good peat fires. He is, no doubt, "Defender of the Faith," but to them, in a far more intimate sense, he is the defender of their rights and homes. He rules the Empire overseas. Yes; but here he is the ruler of the soil and the rights of the soil. In yielding to him loyalty as their King, they offer him at the same time the equally precious gift of their love and their dependence.

CHAPTER XIV

(A.) THE ROYAL CHILDREN

THE Prince of Wales, when I knew him in his “ ’teens,” was a fair, pink and white boy, with very good manners. He showed already embryonic signs of that charm which has made him the World’s Playfellow. Any débutante would have thought herself lucky to have possessed a complexion like His young Royal Highness in those days. The fair hair grew in enchanting points on the round little forehead. Intense blue eyes, a short nose, and a mouth still indefinite and childish—yet a face which had in it already the indefinable elements of character.

There are one or two memories of him that will remain with me always.

A summer afternoon.—I was walking down one of the wide corridors at Buckingham Palace. Suddenly I saw, approaching from the further end, running lightly over the wine-red carpet, a lithe little figure in white flannels—with shirt open at the throat—an enchanting, fair, flushed child, with tumbled golden hair. His small round face, which the bared throat rendered childlike, was rosy with exercise. He smiled, running shyly past me on his toes, a racquet in his hand. He had come from a strenuous battle in the squash racquet court. The setting sun, from one of the tall windows, caught his fair tumbled hair as he passed.

Another memory is of the evening when he appeared for the first time at Windsor Castle in what is known as "the Windsor Uniform," a cut-away evening coat with red facings, only worn by members of the Royal Family and some of the Gentlemen of the Household when at the Castle. It was, I believe, instituted by Queen Victoria.

The little Prince had not yet been promoted to it, and it was a momentous evening when he first appeared in the coat, with miniature medals and knee-breeches. He looked very fair, very physically fit, very perfectly groomed —a very proper little gentleman. His parents were delighted, and he received many congratulations from old and privileged members of the Household.

He was shy, but good-mannered, with a nervous little trick of fingering his tie. His voice was just breaking.

That evening there were no guests, and Princess Mary and her governess, the Prince of Wales and his brothers, Mr. Hansell and I, settled down, after dinner, to "Demon Patience." When played by four or five people against each other, this mild "old maid's" pastime develops the ferociousness of "Animal Grab." Cards may be torn, tables upset. I remember after one game (*not* played at the Castle!) I remained with nothing left in my hand but one eye of the King of Diamonds . . . the rest of His Majesty was scattered in strips about the table.

We were not quite as rough as this at Windsor, but still we played it with a good deal of zest. I wore a long string of pearls round my neck, I remember—I had noticed as I put it on that the clasp had worn a little loose. I hesitated, finally deciding to risk its falling off during the course of the evening. Sure enough—by the end of our second game I missed it. Of course it was just under the card-table. I looked. No sign of it. What was it I missed? asked Mademoiselle. I told them. The children forthwith started a hunt. Everyone looked. No one found it. How very mysterious. I was slightly troubled. Yet surely it could not be far?

The children still hunted vigorously, but they were laughing together and whispering, I noticed. What mischief were they up to? I wondered. I said nothing, and finally the search was abandoned and we continued the game. But my mind was preoccupied by the loss of the pearls; I played with no great attention, and was ignominiously beaten, I remember. After a time, the game had to break up upon the entrance of the King. I was still troubled about the pearls, longing for the moment when I should be free to look for them.

Their Majesties moved to the door, and we all came up to say good night. As I passed the Queen, and was proceeding down the corridor to bed, the Prince of Wales came up behind me, said something and held out his hand. I smiled and curtsied as I wished him good night. He looked at me shyly, but with those curiously observant eyes which missed little, even in those days. "Don't worry, they'll turn up safely, believe me," he said, and turned sharply away. I was astonished at his penetration, for I had said very little about the loss, and believed they had all forgotten it.

I wandered on down the lovely corridor. It was too early for bed, I decided, and so I went and sat, for a time, in Lady Minto's pretty boudoir. Presently, we heard mysterious scufflings out in the passage, and on opening the door found the royal children engaged in a boisterous game of hide-and-seek up and down the stairs.

In this part of the Castle there are little rooms and passages circling apparently forever in a kind of maze. It is easy to lose oneself here as every passage is papered alike, and every door is in the same pattern of white woodwork. A marvellous place for hide-and-seek. We watched them for a little, until Mademoiselle Dussau appeared to carry Princess Mary inexorably off to bed. Her little Royal Highness was flushed like a summer rose. There was nothing she enjoyed more than a good game with " the brothers."

Quiet reigned once more. I said good night to Lady Minto, and went to my room. The pearls again obtruded themselves upon my mind. Where—in Heaven's name—could they be ? I thought, as I flicked up the light near the door, and my little pink bedroom flashed into view. How cosy it looked, with its pink pile carpet, its long mirror, its cheerful fire, before which I proceeded to undress, slowly and luxuriously.

To-morrow, I must tell the sergeant footman about them . . . Sleepily I climbed into bed. On the pillow—carefully arranged in a circle—were the pearls ! " Oh ! those children " . . . I murmured. The Prince of Wales was right.

Late summer, one drowsy hot day after luncheon at Buckingham Palace, I was asked to go with the royal children on their expedition to the White City. Mademoiselle Dussau was on holiday. The party consisted of Princess Mary, the little Princes with their holiday tutor, and myself. A huge old royal landau, that had taken the children for their drives since they were in arms, and that (if I am not much mistaken) may still be descried trundling Princess Elizabeth round the Park, was our mode of conveyance.

It was slow. We took a long time getting there. The heavy chestnuts clattered along with the noise and bustle of highly privileged and not to be hurried quadrupeds. The servants, perched on the high box seat above us, seemed to be dozing in the hot sun. On we went—penetrating the wildest fastnesses of Bayswater. The children did not at all object to the slowness of the journey; they were thoroughly trained to this mode of progression. They talked and laughed and looked about them. Occasionally, the little boys became restless on the hot leather seats, and stood up to watch anything of particular interest.

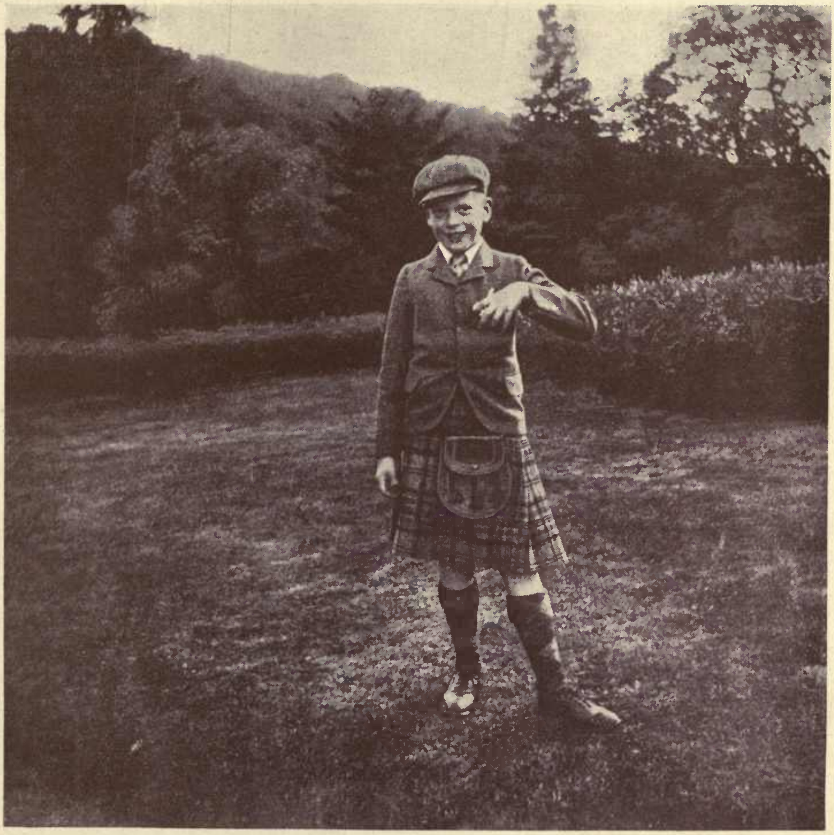
Frequently they were recognised, and then they would raise their minute bowler hats with grave dignity, and in exact imitation of older and more blasé-ed royalty. "We mustn't be recognised at the Exhibition. It would spoil everything." "Then you must tell the coachman and footman not to take their hats off when you leave the carriage," I suggested. "Yes, yes," said the Princes eagerly, "that will be the best plan; then no one will know."

I thought this a little optimistic, but said nothing. Our arrival, however, passed without notice of any kind, and we were able to give ourselves up unrestrainedly to the delights of the Exhibition—until we arrived at the Mountain Railway. As I looked up at the heights, soaring above us, at the rugged crags, where surely not even a goat specially trained by the White City authorities would be able to find a foothold, at the precipitous slopes down which the cars would have to pass, I felt a little doubtful. Would we really like this? Yes, we would!

Tickets were, therefore, procured by the tutor, and the children passed through the turnstile with the usual crowd. No one apparently noticed them. We were lucky enough to get the first vacant seats in the first coach. The Princes and their tutor sat in front, I with Princess Mary just behind. There was some feeling over this, as the Princess wished to get all the front seat thrills with the brothers. But neither the tutor nor I could face the responsibility of having them all in one seat, and so we insisted firmly on separating them.

We were thankful for this arrangement soon after. But we began quietly enough. The slopes were not very steep at first. It was not half as bad as some switch-backs I had known, I thought. Then slowly, the cars gathered momentum—the pace increased, the angles became more abrupt, and soon we were travelling at break-neck speed, falling into bottomless pits which shot us up again on to heights of dizziness. We quivered upon impossible crags, we plunged into terrifying depths.

The tutor, with admirable presence of mind, rescued the two little bowlers from imminent destruction and stowed them away at the bottom of the car. Both Princes were now hanging on to the rail in front with a kind of grim ecstasy. Their eyes dilated—their teeth set—their hair blowing in the wind. Not for the world would they have owned that they were not enjoying it. Presently, at



IN MERRY MOOD.

"The most delightful little schoolboy imaginable."

H.R.H. PRINCE GEORGE.

a more than usually horrible swoop, Prince Henry emitted a shrill scream of excitement. Princess Mary at once followed his example, and after that, at each plunge of the car, they all three screamed together,

The Princess's hat had, by this time, followed the little bowlers into the bottom of the car, and her peculiarly fair and lovely hair now blew free like a mad aureole round her ecstatic face. The tutor held each boy firmly by the coat, whilst I secured a tight grip of Princess Mary's sash, for their excitement was such that it seemed as if they might fall out of the car. As we reached a particularly high crag, I looked down. A great many people were watching the cars, or waiting for their turn at the entrance. In fact there was quite a crowd.

Down again we plunged, and again all three children screamed with delight. Finally, we rushed, as a grand finale, down a long slope, and came to a merciful standstill by the gates. But the children, their faces the colour of peonies, refused to get out. "We must have another round. We *must*, we *must*."

"Keeping your seats, sir?" asked the official in charge of the cars. The tutor glanced at me. "Yes," I said, "Why not?" It was wonderful to see such ecstatic enjoyment. Besides, I felt a little doubtful as to whether it would have been humanly possible to move the children, even if one had wanted to. So fresh tickets were taken, and we started again. As the cars moved off (the children still hatless) I glanced at the crowd, and noticed for the first time that they were all staring at the children. The tutor and I exchanged glances. "If they go on like this, there will have to be mounted police when we come off," he said ruefully.

It mattered less than nothing to our charges. They were far beyond noticing or caring. Up and down we went again, and when we once more came to a standstill there were now stares and nudges, and quite undisguised interest. Indeed, it would have been remarkable if the children had not attracted attention, for with their rapturous enjoyment, their fair flushed faces, and dishevelled little heads, they simply courted recognition.

"It's a great nuisance, but it can't be helped," I said. This time no one thought of getting out. "In for a penny—in for a pound," sort of feeling possessed us all. It would not be much fun for them now to be followed about by a curious crowd, and as they were still enjoying it I thought they might just as well remain where they were. The tutor agreed—and up we shot once more. Nine times in all we did the circuit before the charm of it began to wane, and Prince George inquired about the possibilities of tea, Tea—after this? Oh, help! I felt that nothing but a captain's biscuit and some weak brandy and water would be appropriate.

However, it was obvious that we could not spend the night upon these inhospitable crags, and a move must some time be made. And so hats were retrieved, and when the landing-stage was again reached, we disembarked. Quite a respectable crowd had gathered to stare at the children, and I was thankful to see that an official of the Exhibition had miraculously materialised from somewhere and was waiting for us outside the turnstile. He at once took charge of the party, and guided us to a tea-garden with a hedge round it where he thought public interest would not be too obtrusive.

We sat at a little round table on the grass, but through the whole progress of the meal I could see people outside peering through the hedge, trying to get a glimpse of the party. The children were very hungry. There were large slabs of Dundee cake, the kind of cake that is made more for wear and tear than for consumption, I always think. The children did not agree, and the cake disappeared. It was now growing late, and in view of the interest we had so unwittingly aroused, I suggested that we should leave.

We found our friendly official waiting outside, who escorted the children to their carriage, the Princes raising their little hats to a highly delighted crowd. And so we trundled home, a happy party in the glow of the sunset.

(B.) A DANCING CLASS BEFORE QUEEN VICTORIA

THE following memory belongs to a period long before my appointment to the Household of Queen Mary: before the children of that White City Expedition were in the world at all. But anything that recalls a certain little and great Lady who ruled a great Empire and gave her name to a great age seems to me to be a thing worth remembering, and I record it here.

I was a very small person indeed, only six years old.

We lived in a big red house close to the Long Walk at Windsor. I used to gallop on my little pony through the long lines of trees, the tall, tall trees of Windsor, standing sentinel (some of them) through the centuries round this stronghold of the English Kings. Sitting at ease upon my gallant little steed, I would gaze from the statue high up at the end of the Long Walk to the great, grey battlemented Castle on the opposite rise. Straight as a white ribbon the sanded road ran right up to the very lodge-gates of the Queen's Castle. For a Queen lived there in those days, a great old Queen, surrounded by grand-children and great-grand-children, little fair things whom I often saw being driven in a lumbering landau down the Long Walk.

I had been taught to make a little curtsey when I saw them, and they would stare at me over the side of the carriage with the bland freemasonry of children. Well, now, to-day my mother had told me that I was to join their dancing class at the Castle, the dancing class that was conducted by Mrs. Wordsworth once a week in one of the big cool drawing-rooms. I was over-awed at the prospect. Would the Queen watch us dance? Perhaps. Who were the children? They were called, I understood, " the two little Battenbergs." Shall we be *inside* the Castle? Of course.

I was now very much excited about it, as the Castle had always thrilled me. I remember a party frock and a sash, a short drive up a steep hill in a stuffy brougham that smelt of leather, the darkening of the windows as the carriage passed under the archways (this interested and alarmed me), a sweep into a large quadrangle—and we had arrived. I was led into a high green room with immense windows, through which one could see, for miles, those friends of mine, the trees of Windsor.

There were a few children standing about, oppressed by party frocks and sashes, just as I was. I could see this at a glance, for children read each other's thoughts with greater ease than their elders. There were acres of bare parquet floor, a grand piano, some nannies and governesses, and very high gold and white doors, through which, I was told " the two little Battenbergs " would presently appear.

" Don't forget to make your little curtsey, dear," said my mother. It seemed to me fantastic to curtsey to a child just like myself, but there was no accounting for the whims of " grown-ups."

I now noticed, walking about the room, extremely impressive in a long black satin frock, a little old lady with a very red face. She wore cascades of black lace and a great many gold bangles, and I saw from her air that she was a very important person indeed. " It's the Queen, of course," I thought. Presently she swept up to us. I hung my head. I did not like queens, and there was something very alarming, I thought, about her eyes. " Shake hands with Mrs. Wordsworth," said my mother. I was astounded. If the dancing-mistress was as grand as this, *what* would the Queen be like? She will have to wear her crown to distinguish herself from Mrs. Wordsworth, I thought.

The great dancing-mistress looked down at me. " Have you brought your skipping-rope and ball, my dear? That's right. Now, children "—and she turned to the others. . . . At that moment, the high folding doors opened, and there appeared upon the threshold a tall, stiff lady, holding by the hands a little boy and girl. She released them immediately and pushed them forward, with a low admonition to each. The children advanced shyly and shook hands with the nearest of us, and then went on, with a kind of shy desperation, shaking hands all round. Most of the children made funny little bobs to them.

The girl was the fairest child I had ever seen. In certain lights her hair looked almost white. It curled (or was curled) enchantingly all over her head, like a little page's. She had a fair, flushed face and pretty eyes. She wore a sleeveless lace frock with white ribbon shoulder knots. She had a little pearl bangle. The boy, much the same age, had very sleekly brushed hair, and wore a white sailor suit. After the hand-shaking was over, Mrs. Wordsworth took each of us by the arm and placed us in rows, the two little Battenbergs in front.

The stiff lady who had brought them in, and who, I learnt, was their German governess, had joined the phalanx of mothers and governesses who sat in the big bay windows, watching.

The dancing-class began. "*All* together! *On* your toes!" shouted Mrs. Wordsworth. She had a voice rather like a peacock's proclaiming the rain. She was as impressive as a general conducting a campaign. Under her ruthless eyes, we skipped, we waved clubs, we flung balls over our backs, we polka-ed. It was very exhausting—especially the clubs. One little girl lost her ball and wept. She was instantly received into the sitting phalanx to be hushed and comforted.

Princess Ena found great difficulty in placing her feet in what I believe is known as the "first position." It is not at all a natural position. No one would dream of standing in it, unless forced to do so by someone like Mrs. Wordsworth. I secretly sympathised with the now flushed and distressed little royalty. But Mrs. Wordsworth was inexorable. "Even though you *are* a Princess, you must learn to dance." And down she went on her satin knees before the child, and seizing her ankles, placed them in the correct position. Poor little Princess Ena. I can see her now. The future Queen of Spain felt anything but queenly at that moment, her small body swaying above her forcibly turned out toes.

The class proceeded. Prince Drino, the present Lord Carisbrooke, won commendation for himself in a polka with a chubby little girl partner. But I thought it looked more like a tug of war than a polka. "Rest for ten minutes," then commanded our mentor. We relaxed, and broke up. What now, I wondered! I gave one glance at the window-recess, from which nannies and governesses yearned, and deliberately turned my back. One had enough of that in private life, I decided. I was out for wider adventures than having my sash re-tied.

I sauntered, with a great feeling of independence, towards a green satin sofa that stood against the wall. It was a lovely sofa, I remember, so wide and deep. I walked up to it sedately enough, but at the sight of its smooth, plumped up cushions, I felt a call from the wild, and with one big berserk leap, I sprang into its downy middle—quite regardless of the lady (even grander than Mrs. Wordsworth) to whom it belonged.

As I did so, I felt another plump—almost on top of me, and turning round found Princess Ena and several other little girls also busy plumping. We wriggled about for a few minutes in an indistinguishable heap, then sorted ourselves, and sat down sedately in a row. I glanced at the white-ribboned shoulder knot and at the bare little arm next mine; then became fascinated by the pearl and gold bangle round the little wrist.

I looked at Princess Ena. "Pretty," I said, timidly pointing. She raised her arm, examined the bracelet minutely, then, with a gesture of confidence, offered her wrist to me. "It was a 'birthday' present," she whispered. I looked at it carefully, and decided that I would ask for one just like it. We compared ages, and the difficulties of life inherent in being neither quite schoolroom, nor altogether nursery. "Have you a baby brother?" she asked. "Yes," I admitted, "but he is not very 'intrustin'."

The little girl on the other side of the Princess now lent forward with an important informative air. "Mrs. Wordsworth has a glass eye," she whispered. This was so portentous a piece of news that we received it in silence. Also, one had to collect one's thoughts to try and realise what bearing so tremendous a fact might have on one's own little difficulties. Was it possible that, on the glass-eye side of her, she might not notice how badly one did the "double-through?" It opened out fields of daring possibilities. "But," continued the little girl, "Nannie says she has eyes in the back of her head." I gasped . . . and the fields contracted.

"Now, children," called Mrs. Wordsworth. We flew back into lines, and at that moment both folding doors were opened slowly. On the threshold stood an Indian in a turban. He stepped aside, and there appeared an old lady, rather like Mrs. Wordsworth, I thought, only perhaps with more bangles and greater lengths of black satin. On her head she wore a heavy white cap with long ends. This I recognised for what it was, the sign of widowhood, for my own mother wore one, though she was years younger than this old lady.

The dancing class proceeded. No one took the least notice, except the nannies and governesses, who all stood up. The little old lady advanced with several others, all in deepest black. They seated themselves on the green sofa. The Indian servant stood behind, motionless as a statue.

Round and round we pirouetted, up and down we waved our arms . . . It was hot work. Mrs. Wordsworth seemed to feel it too, for she was very flushed. Presently she stopped the class, and we all stood panting in rows. The old lady on the sofa made a gesture, and Mrs. Wordsworth went up to her and talked to her, sweeping a really magnificent curtsey before she did so.

" It's the Queen," I thought, " and she is asking Mrs. Wordsworth if Princess Ena can do ' the double-through '." The little Princess stood just ahead of me, and I longed to ask her if the Indian servant blacked his face like that to please the Queen, or whether he was naturally that funny colour. But, remembering in time the terrible fact that Mrs. Wordsworth had eyes at the back of her head, I refrained, as talking in the ranks was strictly forbidden.

The dancing-mistress came back to us from her talk with the Queen even redder than before, and she had that curious and unmistakable look on her face that, in later years, I grew to know so well. It is, I think, aptly described as being "gratified," and only notice from royalty can produce it. It is, on the whole, rather a silly look, I think.

Soon after this, the old lady on the sofa rose. "On your toes!" commanded Mrs. Wordsworth, and as the Queen with the other ladies left the room, we gave her, under Mrs. Wordsworth's stentorian direction, our class curtsey. In the deepest part of mine, just as my nose was disappearing into the frills of my frock, I toppled over on to the little boy next me. As a punishment, I had to do it over again, and by myself, to the huge and secret joy of the little boy.

The old Queen smiled at me (a not unkindly smile) as she turned away.

At last the class was over, and the nannies and governesses, cowed (as they had been) by the greater power of Mrs. Wordsworth, now came back into their own with almost blatant triumph. The two little Battenbergs, once more in the grip of the German, disappeared down dizzy lengths of corridor, whilst I was being propelled into a coat. The snap of the hat elastic under my chin seemed for me to conclude the performance.

After that, I relapsed once more into the toils of "the daily round." I submitted mechanically to the usual handling, the well-known admonitions, my childish mind turned in on itself, weaving happily at fantasies from the material of this new experience.

CHAPTER XV

ON TOUR WITH THEIR MAJESTIES

GULLS! White and grey gulls, sweeping across a porthole, against a leaden sky. Thin staccato cries continually shattering the soft sound of water against the sides of a stationary boat. I sat up in the comfortable brass bed, the more easily to watch their lovely erratic swirls above the water. Leaning on my elbow, I became aware of the shore, so close to us, in a huddled mass of flint-grey houses above the docks.

So this was Cardiff. And here we were, settled for three nights on the royal yacht, the *Victoria and Albert*, moored sedately to the quays. For our safe anchorage I was profoundly thankful. I had heard blood-curdling tales of the behaviour of the *V. and A.* at sea. For she was built in those long ago days when no one dreamt of comfort on a voyage. One went to sea with a Bible and one's own private pillow, and jewels concealed in a bag under a petticoat. Of course, one was sick. Since the sea was unstable, so was the stomach—and that was all there was to it.

Any idea of readjustment between the boat and the sea, and incidentally the stomach, did not occur to that generation, who suffered what they were too ignorant to remedy, with Victorian fortitude as part of that " cross " that figured so largely in their lives. From all accounts, the roll the *Victoria and Albert* developed at sea was no light " cross," and so I was deeply thankful that the ugly, grey Welsh town was so reassuringly close.

We had travelled down the day before in a special train, with cheering crowds lining the railway embankments on either side, labourers in the hay-fields gesticulating loyally with ruddy arms, women in sun-bonnets curtseying in the clover, children climbing the telegraph poles, screaming shrilly above the racket of the train. We had lunched in the long saloon all together, with a June sun pouring in at the windows, and the mountains of Wales growing taller and bluer across the sky-line.

It was quite an informal meal, though served by the King's own servants, and with the usual meticulous care, and there were amusing picnic-y things to eat; little rolls stuffed with *foie gras* and cress; cold rissoles, things in aspic, many different kinds of biscuits. The staff work is always very elaborate and very adequate when the King and Queen travel, and everything runs with the same perfect smoothness and punctuality, whether they are in palaces, boats or trains.

Their Majesties were in high spirits that day, in spite of the long week of racing behind them and the arduous programme at Cardiff ahead. Ascot week had passed with its usual brilliance—in sunshine, processions, malmaisons, and white dust! And here we now were, the Tuesday after, racketing down to Wales in order that the King might lay the foundation stone of Cardiff's National Museum. Being a King is anything but a lazy profession, and entails more solid, unceasing work than most people realise.

I had brought a trunkful of dresses for the various functions of the three days' tour. My maid was scornful: "And how are we going to change in and out of all these things, all day long, in a small cabin on a boat? And I don't believe there will be any hangers," she said dolefully. I was annoyed at her gloomy forebodings. "I expect a Royal yacht is a little differently arranged from any boat you've been accustomed to," I said tartly. The maid looked doubtful. Pleasure steamers off Yarmouth had shaken her faith in the commodiousness of sea travel, and she was, no doubt, at this moment indulging her dark prognostications in some other part of the train.

Lady Ampthill and I, the only two "ladies" on the Welsh tour, retired after lunch to our separate compartments. I watched for some time the ever-changing landscape growing bluer and softer in outline as we entered the west country. The crazy, straggling walls of loose flints; the tall factory chimneys, slate-pencilled against the sky; the grey villages huddled in the billowing curves of pleasant little hills, the little winding streams. . . . And then I fell asleep.

When I opened my eyes again the train was approaching the Docks, through a maze of flint-coloured houses, whose windows were crowded with a waving, shouting, dark-haired people. The railway embankments on either side were packed with them, cheering, jumping, gesticulating. The train was slowing down. I rose and looked along the blue-carpeted corridor. The King and Queen were standing at the windows of their saloon, bowing and smiling, the Queen waving her hand to the myriads of dirty little children running with the train along the line.

Mr. McKenna, the Minister in attendance for this tour, was with them. Great public enthusiasm is a very moving thing to see and hear. The tears came to my eyes . . . We rattled over "points," and through a gap in the houses I caught sight of the sea—the lazy sea of the west, placid in the June sunshine. We were circling a bend, and suddenly the great docks were visible, and—like something from another world—white and black and yellow from stern to prow—the royal yacht. Moored close up to the cobbled quays, upon which the inevitable red carpet had been stretched, she looked like some lovely ghost ship, in all the dusty welter of the Cardiff docks.

A group of local dignitaries could be seen awaiting the arrival of the train, and behind them the ship's officers, square and trig in their blue and gold. The train drew up slowly, exactly opposite the white sail-cloth awning of the ship's gangway. As I scrambled out, a fresh warm breeze from the sea fanned my face. The King and Queen descended, and were immediately engulfed by the reception committee. The inevitable Mayor, furred and chained, advanced, backed by a stalwart phalanx of Councillors. The Mayor had a competent expression, I thought. I have become quite an authority on Mayors, and shall some day write a book on them. This one was very different from a confrère of his whom I met on a somewhat similar Royal tour in Canada. He, poor man, was anything but competent, and two days before the arrival of the Governor-General's party, wrote an impassioned appeal to the Duke of Connaught's secretary for help and guidance, as he was not, he said, "used to handling royalty."

The Mayor of Cardiff needed no guidance, nor did the Lord Lieutenant, portentous and important. These gentlemen, and several rather tremulous ladies in summer frocks pushing before them a scared little girl with a bouquet much larger than her head, composed the "Reception Committee." Behind them, who were all a little self-conscious and flushed, stood the ship's officers immovably at "attention," broad-shouldered, clean-cut men, the discipline of the Service obliterating all fuss or shyness.

The King and Queen, after some business of hand-shaking crossed the intervening space of red carpet and went aboard, followed by their suite, to the strains of the National Anthem. And instantly everything seemed changed. Contacts on land are so hard, outlines so heavy. Now the instability of water surrounded us, and though perfectly stationary, everything, in a subtle way, had become more uncertain, less stable. One became conscious of an almost imperceptible sway, and all around was the glitter and dazzle and the strange impermanence of the sea.

There were long, white-painted passage-ways. I made my way down one with a guide, and found a gay little white cabin that had been reserved for my use. It had a brass bed with chintz hangings, a green carpet, and a bathroom next door, and through the wide-open porthole the sunlight streamed, cut across by the shadowy flight of gulls. I drew a long sigh. This *was* rather delicious after the hot train. I noticed a large white enamelled hanging cupboard —and drew another sigh—of relief. If it contained "hangers," then all would be well. I opened it. It did.

I sat down on the bed. Sounds of physical strain came to my ears from the passage-way. I looked out. Two white-clad stewards were puffing and blowing with my trunk and suitcases already aboard. My maid (welcome sight!) brought up the rear of the procession. She was no longer doleful. The strange exhilaration of "life a-board the lugger" possessed her. She looked almost rakish, and I could even imagine her not caring if there were "hangers" or not. At sight of the cupboard she became lyrical.

But I had no time to listen to her ecstasies, for an immediate summons came for me to attend Her Majesty upon a tour of the Docks. After a hurried tea we left the yacht, and boarded a little train which had miraculously appeared. Mr. McKenna accompanied Their Majesties as well as the Mayor and most of the local dignitaries.

For an hour we puffed importantly along, on the edge of that busy world, half on shore, half on the water, amid that dusty welter of complicated things that civilisation has created to hide the living poem of the sailing and return of ships. Here the clang and clatter of machinery overlays the vast and simple idyll of the sea, and only glimpses of it can occasionally be caught in a face tanned by a far sun, in a blue jersey, in festoons of gaudy seaweed on an old anchor chain, in masts against the sky. . . . But the tan is darkened by a powder of Welsh coal dust, and the men in jerseys, with the look of far places on their faces, work here all day long in the belching smoke, in a clatter of hawsers and the screaming of cranes. Coal dust poisons the sunlit waters where the imprisoned ships ride at anchor, and the gulls swoop for the floating offal of the streets.

Yet the Cardiff docks have a macabre beauty all their own, and it was an interesting tour. At seven o'clock precisely, the little train came to a standstill opposite the gangway of the *Victoria and Albert*, and we once more went aboard. I made my way to my little green and white cabin, and here, to the soft lap of water, the swirl of gulls past the portholes, and the glimmer of sunlight on the ceiling, I dressed for the dinner party that Their Majesties were giving on the yacht for the local dignitaries.

I found my maid still in ecstasies. Her opinion of the *V. and A.* had steadily risen since she came aboard, and now she seemed to think it a pity we were not going for a cruise in her. I did not agree. I was still glad to peep out and see the solid cobbled quays so close. But when, at last dressed, I went up the companion-way, the sun was setting with dusky splendour in the sea, flashing a golden path straight over to the Americas—or so it seemed to me!

Oh, romance! To set sail—in the still of the evening—for the wider worlds. To leave this little island, huddled up in its northern seas against an over-crowded continent, for the great wide spaces of the Atlantic, and the teeming, hurrying, evolving vastness of the New World! I stood by the seaward windows of the saloon, and gazed and gazed. Then, turning, saw upon the other side the little grey town sharing the angry splendour of sea and sky, every window a-glow with it.

Lady Ampthill came up the companion-way, very tall, very beautiful, the jewels on her head and round her neck glittering in the roseate twilight. We watched together the arrival of the guests upon the now dusky quays. Then the Master of the Household came up to us with a red-bound plan of the dinner-table, just as he did at Buckingham Palace and at Windsor. Travelling with Their Majesties gives one a reassuring feeling of stability. Whatever is happening, wherever they are, the same routine is carried out with the same smoothness and dignity. It creates an atmosphere of its own, very definite, and quite unaffected by outside circumstances. We were shown our places at the table. The guests arrived, and presently the King and Queen joined them, talking a little to everyone in turn, until we went in to dinner in the long saloon.

Here the dinner table, with flowers and lights and silver, stretched its glittering length between closely curtained windows. I sat, I remember, between General McKinnon and Lord Edmund Talbot. The dinner was not very long, and soon we were trooping up the companion-way again on to the deck, where I understood some kind of concert was to take place.

Just as I was half-way up the steps, I became conscious of one of the most beautiful sounds I have ever heard. It was like an organ with the *vox humana* stop on, yet even richer and more powerful. I looked up through the hatchway above me. The decks were brilliantly illuminated and closed in with white sail-cloth. The King and Queen had just stepped out from the companion-way, and the lovely sound resolved itself into the National Anthem, yet sung as I had never heard it sung before, by a hundred united Welsh voices trained to create the very perfection of sound.

Wales is a land of singers, as all the world knows, yet the first time one hears one of the really great Welsh choirs is a moment one is never likely to forget. It is, in a sense, a revelation, and fills one with startled amazement at the sense of power, the wealth of harmony, that training can produce from this naturally musical people. If there are choirs of angels, then they will sing like that, I thought, and came out on deck, full of startled wonder. The Swansea Choir were massed on raised benches, and gilt chairs had been placed for us all in rows. But we remained standing, for after the National Anthem they broke softly into "God Bless the Prince of Wales."

The massed Welsh voices, with the organ note in them, vibrating softly with Celtic passion across the waters, quiet now under a silver moon. I raised a flap of the awning, and saw the town rising from the quays in a cone of many lights. Behind the town I sensed the rugged mountains, deserted sentinels in the moonlight, where first that cry had been heard. Surely now that same appeal from the luxurious lighted white yacht, moored in the summer darkness to the quays, woke the echoes in those far, still hills, where centuries ago the same name had been proclaimed.

As the last sound of it died away on one exquisite note, low, and clear and sustained, there came faint cheers across the water from some steamers close by. The concert began. It lasted an hour. And then the singers went home, the guests were put ashore, and we were left on the moonlit yacht to seek our quarters for the night. "Early to bed," said the Master of the Household with his kindly smile, "for we have a long day before us to-morrow." Later I drew the short green curtain aside and peeped out of my porthole. The lights of the town were going out. It was dark on the quays, and on the other side of us the sea lay quiet in the moonlight. The masts of the stationary ships stood out sharp in the summer darkness. A great fatigue possessed me. I tumbled, half asleep, into the brass bed, leaving the porthole uncurtained, and lay there gazing out into a mystery of darkness until I fell asleep.

Sir Charles Frederick was right. The next day was very long, very full and busy. At ten o'clock we all went ashore and got into semi-state carriages for the drive through the town to what is now the site of the National Museum. I found myself in a carriage with Lady Ampthill and Lord Herschell, the Lord-in-Waiting.

As we came up from the quays I looked back at the yacht. I already thought of her as "home." Now she was glistening in the sunlight with brass and white paint, a proud, snowy swan among the grimy ugly ducklings of the wharfs.

It had been so quiet last night on the water—the soft lap of it, the moonlight stealing in through the porthole, lying like a benediction across the end of the bed; the low weird cry of some sea-bird—and the sea itself—so near—stirring faintly in the calm benignity of a night in June. I had slept deep and long, until indeed the patter of feet on deck, sunshine and a reproachful maid had awakened me to the duties of the day. Here was a very different world—a world of light and movement and bustling activity. For long, long hours every sense would now be swamped in the noise and tumult of the tour.

If I close my eyes, I can, at will, bring back the sights and sensations of every royal tour I have done. They are, after all, very much alike. But it is not easy to convey to those who have had no experience of them the strange blaze of public life, the tumultuous impressions, the deprivation of all privacy, the ceaseless strain which they entail. I can imagine few things more shattering for a private individual, interesting though they often prove. No doubt to royalties, accustomed to them in some cases from childhood, they present no very great emotional experience.

But to one unused to the ordeal of publicity, unprepared for the emotional strain of mass loyalty and excitement, unsteeled to the roar of great crowds, the shrill screams of thousands of children—the breathing and standing and driving and eating in a long, never-ending uproar of public interest and enthusiasm, an attendance on a royal tour is one of the most fatiguing experiences I know! There is never any slackening of the strain, for there is never a moment for privacy or peace. It is a greater ordeal than most people realise to drive slowly through dense masses of cheering people, though the cheers are not for oneself. To walk out on to high platforms and see for miles beneath one, stretching away like a great black sea, a seething mass of human beings, all staring, all breaking into audible expressions of loyal enthusiasm. To stand perfectly still under the stares of thousands, to hear the crash of that eternal tune; and everywhere to have to meet and deal with people who are strung up and not their natural selves, to whom this moment has been the lodestar of many weeks of preparation.

To rise, each time, to the level of their enthusiasm after long, tiring days of it, is no mean feat of nervous control. To eat strange meals, in a hurry, sitting beside strange people who look important and dignified, but of whose local status, and sometimes even of whose names, one is anything but sure (though more often than not one has been conscientiously informed)—in strange houses, of whose ownership one has not the foggiest idea. Constantly to be on terms of familiar intercourse with strangers one is never likely to see again.

Then flags . . . flags . . . ever more flags, on house fronts, in festoons across the streets, in the hand of every child, who waves each his little one as the procession passes. For miles the school-children make fringes down the kerbs. Flags, more flags. At the end of a royal tour, I have much fellow-feeling with the Spanish bull whom anything red infuriates. I am afraid that the Lady Mayoress of "Moose-Jaw," or some such mid-prairie town received scant sympathy from me when she exclaimed, as we drove side by side in the procession through the town, "I *do* love a bit of bunting, don't you?" I thought, for a moment, that she was alluding to some kind of food; she said it with such relish and looked quite carnivorous, I thought.

On this Welsh tour, the scheme of decoration was varied by triumphal arches of coal, inlaid with picks and miners' tools; and a frieze of miners' safety lamps—quite an ingenious idea.

Then horses, trotting briskly . . . the ever-present guardianship of the police, of whom one is curiously conscious all through the crowded, tiring days. They are always there, close to one, quiet, unobtrusive, but entirely adequate. Through the roar of cheering crowds, through the crash of military bands, through the press and tumult that beat all day ruthlessly upon the senses, one feels, on every side, at all moments, their calm, steady and efficient intervention.

The laying of the foundation stone of the National Museum in Wales was a very long proceeding, entailing a procession, speeches, banquets, presentations, and planting of trees. After it, we returned to the yacht for lunch. In the afternoon, we went ashore again and visited Llandaff Cathedral, and (a welcome interlude) had a picnic with Lord and Lady Bute at Caerphilly Castle, a wonderful, old Norman ruin. I remember the jagged points of its grey, mutilated battlements rising through the enveloping ivy, thrown up like lace-work against the sky. We had tea on the grass in the grounds. There was a hot sun, and a glimpse of the sea in the distance, and a pleasant little meandering stream, round which the Bute children played, a happy, natural throng, not at all shy of their illustrious guests.

After tea Their Majesties wished to visit a little church that was reputed to have some wonderful brasses. The church was in a hollow, down a little pathway, so narrow that we had almost to walk in single file. On the left of the path was a high wall, upon the top of which a good many people were standing to watch Their Majesties pass. The King and Queen walked first, closely followed by Lord Bute and by Mr. McKenna, Minister in attendance.

The latter was immaculately attired in full London kit, in a frock-coat and a glistening top-hat. Lady Ampthill and

I walked just behind him. Quite suddenly, from off the high wall, without a second's warning, a woman hurled herself down upon him, a mad, dishevelled figure, shouting shrilly, "Votes for Women." I was so close to her when she jumped that she fell almost on top of me, and she managed as she did so to knock the Minister's top-hat off his head into the dust. A wild-eyed creature, half-scared at her own temerity. Almost before she had found her feet again, and before poor Mr. McKenna could retrieve his hat, she was in the hands of two burly inspectors of police, who gave short shrift to her demands, and hustled her away, still screaming at intervals her shrill battle-cry: "Votes for Women!"

How long ago—how absurd it seems now. Their Majesties, after one hasty glance back, walked on with calm dignity. It is an unwritten law with royalty that disturbances should not be noticed, unless unavoidably brought to their attention. Mr. McKenna, too, behaved with admirable sang-froid. Picking up his hat and flicking the dust from it with his gloves, he glanced back at us with a rueful little half-smile, then walked on, without a word, after the King and Queen. The whole incident, thoroughly unpleasant though it was, could not have lasted more than three or four minutes, and no one, except the woman, said anything at all, either at the time or afterwards. Such is the discipline of the royal entourage.

Soon after this, we returned once more to the yacht, and to another dinner-party, at which I sat, I remember, next Lord Aberdare. And again, after dinner, the Welsh choir sang on the brilliantly-lighted decks, and again, when all had gone, quiet fell like a benediction upon the moonlit waters, and I fell asleep with my porthole wide and uncurtained to the deserted, dusky quays.

The next day was spent among the collieries, in great iron and steel foundries, where, in an appalling noise of machinery, we watched the molten, red-hot metal pouring like rivers of Hell down iron runnels; we saw it stretched and tested and beaten by men, naked to the waist, blackened, perspiring, implacable giants—gods of this inferno of noise and revolving wheels.

Everywhere the miners and colliery hands thronged in great multitudes, demonstrating a Celtic enthusiasm and loyalty, almost pagan in intensity. Hundreds and hundreds of tired, coal-blackened men, who had had no opportunity or time to wash away the grime of service, but gathered—straight from the mines—in huddled, black-faced crowds round their arches of coal, beneath their gaudy festoons of flags, cheering, waving, shouting: "Long live the King! Long live the Queen—God bless the Prince!"

Amid crowds and coal dust, by processional routes, through flint-grey villages, where houses looked stunted and the black coal arches contrasted sharply with the endless arches of flags, by slack heaps and mine shafts, we reached at last Lord Bessborough's house for luncheon. We certainly needed it. I sat, I remember, next the Chairman of Something or Other—but by that time, I was so confused by the noise and dust and heat and crowds of our progress that I formed no very clear conception whom I sat next or what I ate. All that seemed of vital importance was to get enough food before the next thing happened—the next noise started—the next procession formed. One ate mechanically, with one eye on the authorities who would give the signal for the next move.

Should I ever know Wales as a land of anything but shouting crowds and overpowering loyalty, I wondered? Should I ever forget this fatigue in the benediction of its hills—in the hushed beauty of its valleys; see the soft grey light on its flocks of ragged little sheep? That very evening I caught a glimpse of these blessed things—when, as the twilight came, we took to a fleet of motors and spun down the Aberdare valley to some station with an unpronounceable name. Here a special train waited to convey Their Majesties back to the docks. But, alas! only a glimpse, and once more in the train, we proceeded between embankments black with cheering people, ceaselessly waving and shouting, with devotion—worship—in their eyes.

Through these dusty multitudes, through a welter of factories and cranes and busy shipping yards, we came, at last, within sight of the sea, and the white yacht like a ghost in the dusk. Her lights were up—her portholes blazing, the gangway ready. She seemed to welcome us in our weariness—dusty, crowd-handled travellers that we were.

We left the stuffy train, and went aboard where the spotless decks glistened and the breeze from the sea murmured softly down the corridors. Oh, heaven! I opened a seaward window, and through a maze of intervening masts and funnels and derricks caught a glimpse of that still immensity beyond. And my heart filled with worship for the silent places and the healing fellowship of sea and sky. . . .

The next morning was devoted to infirmaries and hospitals. I did not go with the Queen, but left the yacht later by car with Lord Herschell and Sir Charles Frederick. We met Their Majesties at the station, where we all entrained for Bristol, lunching on the train. A strenuous programme there, including a procession through the town, concluded the tour, and we left on the 6.30 for London—home—and a well-earned rest.

CHAPTER XVI

THE QUEEN'S DAY

I WONDER if any woman who says vaguely: "I should like to be a Queen," has any idea of the tremendous rôle she is wishing to assume, or can form any conception of the heavy load of work and responsibility which that position entails! To the mind of the general public, the Queen is a gracious figure-head, always smiling, always walking on red carpets, always receiving bouquets.

They have little or no knowledge of the self-dedication and self-forgetfulness that go to the making of the technique they so much envy and admire. For to be a queen requires as much technique as any humbler profession, as much training, as great a vocation. It has a strenuous novitiate, and the privileges, that the ignorant may perhaps envy, are paid for in the hard coin of work and responsibility. "Let's be a queen," says the little girl in the nursery, and struts about happily with a train and a paper crown. "Oh, to be a Queen," says the envious beggar, as the great procession passes. . . . "God help me to be a queen," whispers the real one in her Palace.

Her Majesty, Queen Mary, is as heavily burdened with responsibility as are most Sovereign ladies, but she bears it with a steady optimism, with a practical philosophy all her own. Let us see if it would be possible to peep (as the fairies peep!) into one of the great Palaces, and catch a glimpse of the many occupations of the Queen's day.

We will choose a bright morning at Buckingham Palace in the spring. The great belts of trees that guard this royal residence from the streets are breaking into ardent green. In the flower-beds beneath the Queen's windows (Her Majesty's private apartments look out on the garden) ranks of gaudy tulips open cup-like heads to a still timid sun, and under the trees, in golden battalions, the pale daffodils cluster in the shade. Through the limpid stillness of early morning comes the mellow sound of London clocks striking eight. At this hour, the Queen in her Palace rises to greet another busy day.

Her Majesty has two maids, or "dressers," as they are called, highly trained, responsible women, as well they should be, to be in charge of so large a wardrobe, to have the handling of almost priceless jewels. Not far from Her Majesty's dressing-room, is a large room encircled by full-length mirrors. A toilet table stands in the window, furnished with a great assortment of pins and scissors. Hardly any other furniture is in the room, except a chair or two. It is here that the well-known dressmakers come to fit the Queen's dresses, always, in the early stages, on a stand, but for the last fitting Her Majesty comes herself, to make final alterations and decisions, before those rich creations in their pale, "pastelle" shades are ready to add their lustre to her always gracious presence.

Dear me! An hour has already passed, as we have wandered through the rooms, and the clocks are now striking nine. Soon now there is breakfast at the Palace. Always a cheery meal. The Queen is punctual. She stands in the sunny breakfast-room, fastening a jewelled bangle on her wrist, glancing out of the windows. The King enters, perhaps laughing over something with Prince George, his tall, good-looking young son, who follows him into the room and crosses over at once to his mother. He kisses her extended hand, and is then embraced by Her Majesty. The Prince's salute is quickly, gracefully done, with the ease of long practice. The Queen's sons have always, since they were quite little boys, kissed their mother's hand. It was charming to watch them making their little bows, stooping swiftly over the kind hand, and then raising little faces, rosy and shy, to be kissed in their turn.

Nowadays, it is usually quite a small party that assembles for breakfast at Buckingham Palace, although in the spring it is augmented by the aged Duke of Connaught. He walks in, fresh from his daily walk before breakfast, and sits down with the Royal family for well-earned refreshment. He is rosy with health, his eye as clear and bright as a boy's. He laughs his genial, whole-hearted laugh, the very sound of it proclaiming him the charming, kind-hearted, great gentleman he is.

Here then is the Queen at breakfast, a gracious personality at the head of the table, surrounded by those she loves. Her face perhaps is grave, her eyes amused. For amusement dances often in the Queen's eyes, giving to her whole face a curiously attractive and humorous expression. Indeed, it would be difficult not to be often amused when Prince George is anywhere about, for this young Prince has a fund of humour amounting almost to a gift.

As a little boy, he would keep his playmates in fits of laughter, and the severity of the solemnest of tutors was never quite proof against his merry twinkle. He and his great-uncle, the Duke of Connaught, are fast friends, and many are the laughs they have had together. The servants in their red liveries move noiselessly to and fro. The spring sun streams in at the windows.

As the meal proceeds, plans for the day or perhaps for days ahead are discussed; newspapers are glanced at, the Queen opens her personal letters. All the others, in the daily immense budget which her Majesty receives, have been sent up to the Lady-in-Waiting's sitting-room and will be dealt with later. Soon breakfast is over. It is never a lengthy meal, for each of these august people has a hundred and one things to accomplish and get through in the day which stretches ahead. Every moment is of value to them, every hour is booked.

Soon the Queen returns to her private sitting-room, that pleasant, spacious room that looks over quiet lawns and bright flower-beds, whose beautiful appurtenances—the lovely furniture, flowers, photographs and jewelled bibelots—give really no hint of the strenuous work that is accomplished here. Only the big writing-table in the window, with its many papers and tidy docketing, gives that hint.

But even here it is very guarded. Who would think that in this flower-scented room, where no faintest echo of the noise of the streets can penetrate, so much is really accomplished for the betterment of men and women who hardly know of the existence of its gracious owner? Men and women in grimy dockyard houses, in the slum tenements, in far-away teeming streets; myriads of unknown people, whose lives occupy the Queen's mind, whose affairs pass often through her succouring hands.

These existences she has never seen, except by the light of sympathy and vision. These lives with which she has never come in contact except perhaps in prayer. . . . For they form the Queen's secret rosary which each day she cons with thoughts of sympathy and succour. The harassed, over-worked, under-fed mother of six or seven pallid children, bent over the eternal wash-tub, cooking the interminable meals—is not at all aware of the lady in the quiet room who gazes thoughtfully into the garden, and sees, perhaps, nothing of its beauties. For she is focussing her mind, concentrating all her great practical abilities upon the problem of some such over-worked existence with as great an absorption, as passionate a desire to better it as the mother herself could feel.

But the woman does not know this. Even if she were told of it, she wouldn't believe it. "What! The Queen of England taking an interest in me? Go on! What could she do for me? The Queen is in her Palace, receiving bouquets and playing with Princess Elizabeth."—In reality, the Queen is in her Palace, bent above her busy writing-table, in a maze of technical details, plans or schemes.—And, as a result, something gets done. And perhaps the actual messenger of hope is no one more inspiring or romantic than an L.C.C. inspector, or an over-officious district visitor.

And the woman scolds, perhaps. Such messengers do not appeal to her. But by them the help is given, the burden lightened, and the mother never knows that her thanks and gratitude are due—not to these always unwelcome officials of the State—but to a gracious, kindly lady, far away in a great Palace. "Me—thank the Queen of

England ?" she might exclaim, and perhaps laugh at the mere idea of any relationship or tie between her and Queen Mary. But the tie is there all the same. There is another bead of mercy upon the Queen's rosary. . . .

It is ten o'clock already. The Queen touches a jewelled bell. This rings a little peal straight into the Lady-in-Waiting's sitting-room, in a far distant part of the Palace. She gathers the morning's mail into her basket and hurries along the many corridors to her royal mistress. As she enters the sitting-room, the Queen looks up with a smile, over her already busy pen. Lady X curtseys, and advances to the writing-table. Her Majesty and her " lady " talk pleasantly for a few moments on personal topics, then Lady X draws up a chair close to the table, and together, she and her royal mistress go expeditiously through the morning's post. This always covers an enormous range.

One by one, each letter is carefully scanned and dealt with, from the illiterate scrawl of perhaps an old Welsh cottager describing, for the Queen's benefit, some new knitting stitch, to the wife of a Dominion Premier, who wishes to engage the Queen's interest or influence in some colonial scheme. One by one, each receives the same attentive consideration. Many times the contents require a summons to some other person, or persons, in whose special department the application lies. These people are either sent for, or seen later by the Lady-in-Waiting.

Then there are audiences; all the people who beg to see the Queen, who must see the Queen. Some mother, perhaps, to speak of a distinguished son; the wife of a returning Governor-General; Lady A with a new scheme for a dockyard settlement; a President of the London Needlework Guild with long lists to be scanned; the Treasurer of a Hospital; the matron of a crèche who begs for a visit or brings a report; widows, soldiers, people who have earned an audience by charity, by heroism, or by scientific renown; people in grief, people in triumph; people well-known or unknown—all the morning long they pass noiselessly in and out of the Queen's presence, receiving commands, tendering advice; accepting sympathy or instructions. And to each the lady at the writing-table gives the full attention of her able mind, the fund of sympathy that is in her heart, the power that is in her hands.

Then the Master of the Household asks for half-an-hour—some detail of arrangement. An official of the Lord Chamberlain's office must be seen on some ceremonial particular. Then there is a mass of detail and arrangements and reports from the various royal residences, in the upkeep of which the Queen always takes the most ardent interest; the factor, perhaps, from Balmoral, the housekeeper from Windsor; the agent from Sandringham; even, perhaps, someone from the Palace of Holyrood, with some arrangements for the Courts which Their Majesties hold there occasionally. Then an architect, perhaps, with a plan, a sculptor with sketches for a royal memorial, a portrait-painter, a miniaturist . . . so it goes on. . . . And all through the busy morning, liaison must be kept with the King, and messengers hurry to and fro, with memos and notes, and a mass of information on every conceivable subject. Yes, a busy morning!

As the hours wear on towards luncheon-time, half-an-hour is perhaps snatched for a little sharp exercise in the garden, but even this is not always possible. When it is, it is always a great pleasure to Her Majesty to walk round the trim gravel paths of the Palace garden in the sun; to pause by the bright flower-beds, to have a word or two perhaps with the head gardener. As the season advances, and the weather becomes warmer, a tent for Her Majesty is pitched in some sheltered grassy spot near the broad Terraces; a carpet is laid down, chairs and a table brought out, and here the Queen and her secretaries work through the morning in the pleasant deep shade, in the humming of bees and the scent of flowers, and the Queen's footman may be seen, hurrying constantly up and down the Terraces on various errands of liaison with the many departments in the Palace.

Lunch is usually taken with one or two guests. Distinguished foreigners, colonial governors and their wives, departing or arriving ambassadors are often asked. The King and Queen are always anxious to obtain first-hand knowledge and information about every part of their far-flung Empire, however remote, and so people returning from great and responsible positions abroad may be fairly certain of being summoned either to an audience or to a meal. But as a rule the luncheon parties are small and intimate, for so much has to be accomplished in the afternoon that it is not a meal over which Their Majesties linger.

The rest of the day is generally mapped out in detail. There is always a long list of institutions, hospitals, crèches, or convalescent homes who have desired or earned a visit, and Her Majesty every afternoon drives out on some official mission. Sometimes two or three are accomplished in one afternoon, and the Queen will go from bed to bed in a hospital, will watch the children at play in a crèche, delighting the matron by some intimate reference to her own little grandchildren. Or she will visit a school, or cheer the old inmates of an Infirmary, or talk to disabled soldiers on their work.

She will review needlework, hand-looms, basket-work or carpentry. She will nurse the babies and talk to the mothers in a maternity home; discuss the latest scientific inventions with surgeons, and sympathise with the tired nurses in a new rest-house. All the afternoon, she will watch her people at work and at play, holding them in her arms in infancy, cheering them with her presence in the last shadowy years. Dim old folk will see her smile, babies feel her succouring arms, mothers her understanding sympathy; disabled ones her pride in their achievements, her sorrow at their price. All through the busy afternoon, unflagging—tireless, always equal to the ceaseless demands on her time, her energies, on her understanding and her love.

If any free moment remains before she must return to the Palace for tea Her Majesty will visit, perhaps, an Art Exhibition, or pay a wholly unexpected private visit. But what she loves best is to wander round some old curiosity shop, picking up a treasure here and there, to bear back in triumph to the Palace. Over this the Queen is almost girlish in her enthusiastic interest. Her Majesty will wander round a dark old shop, followed by its obsequious, perhaps Hebrew, owner, who more often than not has not guessed the identity of his gracious customer until something in the manner, the beautiful clothes, the great motor waiting outside, will arouse his interest and suspicions.

The Queen will wander slowly round, will perhaps not touch anything, but will pick and choose and point, unerring in her valuation. And things are put aside for her, and she will leave the owner proud and happy at the thought of the parcel he will presently address with his own hand to Buckingham Palace.

Tea-time—and a cheerful time. The Queen sits on the sofa dispensing tea. Very little trace of her busy, strenuous afternoon can be seen now in the serene face, except perhaps in the faintly shadowed eyes. Her Majesty has relinquished for a few moments her heavy responsibilities, and is resting now in a happy, quiet, family atmosphere. Perhaps cousins will come to tea, the late Princess Christian's daughters are always welcome visitors. Sometimes one or two of the Queen's sons will drift in. But on the whole this is more a feminine meal and hour, and Her Majesty's only daughter and the much-loved little daughter-in-law may often be found gathered round the hospitable table, with its great gold tea equipage, with many dainty things to eat. And perhaps, about this time, the doors will open to admit an adorable little figure with a crown of golden curls, who rushes straight for grandmamma's welcoming arms, an impetuous, chuckling, wholly delightful little person—very much a personage too, with quaint little airs of dignity all her own.

She is followed in by a grave-faced nurse, with a little white bundle of softness on her arm. This, the Duchess of York receives and holds close to her heart, while Princess Margaret Rose's chubby, restless little fingers grope for the lovely pearls she knows so well. Yes, there is a very restful family atmosphere as a rule about tea-time at Buckingham Palace. But there are other days when the Queen is alone, and then she receives some lady with whom she wishes particularly to talk.

From six to seven Her Majesty will probably rest if the evening is to be an arduous one. She will lie upon the chaise-longue in her private sitting-room, close to her bedroom, where malmaison carnations in vases fill the room with their intoxicating scent. It will be very quiet. No one will disturb the Queen, as the garden beneath the windows slowly darkens, and the little table lamp by the sofa glimmers like a yellow star in the gathering dusk. A peaceful hour. . . .

But presently it will be time for Her Majesty to rise and dress, and the maids will bring out some beautiful, dazzling frock, and diamonds will presently be pinned to the already glittering fabric. On gala nights, the blue Ribbon of the Garter will be adjusted across the dress, and secured by a beautiful jewel upon the shoulder.

And so the end of a long day still finds the Queen superbly ready, crowned, jewelled, invested and serene.

You and I—let us hide in the long corridor, and catch one last glimpse of this regal figure as it passes to the State Apartments for the last duties of the day. The coronet glitters in the soft and shadowy hair—the long train, exquisitely embroidered, brushes softly over the Persian rugs ; the Koh-i-Noor shines above the Garter. . . . So she passes from our sight down the great dazzling corridor of her public life. A Queen indeed—in full queenly panoply, bent upon queenly tasks—untiring—unselfish—dutiful—and serene.

CHAPTER XVII

A GREAT CHANGE

EARLY autumn. I was in waiting at Balmoral Castle. The golden afternoon had whipped up my energies for a tramp on the moors. I covered miles, walking by myself, on the purple springy carpet of the heather, with the beckoning of blue hills on the horizon, and the lure and romance that is Scotland in my heart.

"*How* I wish something really thrilling would happen to me," I thought, as I splashed through a golden burn, missing the stepping-stone each time. "Something that would bring a great change into my life—take me right out of the humdrum, beaten track of London—shooting visits—Scotland—and London again! All very well in its way, but monotonous—year after year. . . ."

As I eventually approached the Castle, a light mist had risen, that shadowy precursor of the twilight. Through it the Castle glimmered like a ghost, with a few lighted windows, like little jewelled inlays in the stone. I hurried across the wide gravelled sweep to the big porch, a little uncertain of the time and of how long I had been absent. The great square hall was welcoming and brightly lit, its light woodwork a pleasant background for the many heads and horns that adorned it. A big fire was already roaring in a gigantic steel grate, for the evenings in the North grow quickly chilly.

But I did not linger, for the clock in the corner said half-past six, and I was anxious to get back to my room for a rest and change before dinner. Along the corridors I hurried, wondering (without much real interest) what new guests had arrived during the afternoon and would make their first shy appearance at dinner.

On entering my large, airy bedroom, the firelight and the wealth of chintz tartan struck a note of cosiness and gaiety. Outside the windows a group of birch trees glimmered gold in the gathering mists. "Oh, it's nice to be back in the warmth. It's not me for a night on the heather. . . ." I thought, and sat down by the fire, staring (a little sleepy from so much exercise) into the fiery red and blue country of the flames.

And again, that strange longing for something new, unexpected, took possession of me. I glanced over my shoulder and rose, with a vague idea of finding it in the evening post. There, on my writing-table, I found a white slip of paper. On it was written: "The Queen desires Miss Villiers to dress early and to come as soon as possible to Her Majesty's sitting-room." I was flabbergasted. Such a thing had never happened before. It was never at that hour that I saw the Queen. Nor had she ever sent for me to her private sitting-room before. . . . I became uneasy. What did this portend? Had I done anything wrong? Surely I had talked conscientiously to everyone next me at meals? Had I been boisterous with the children? Too flippant with a bishop? Supposing. . . . Yet all the time, the idea of Her Majesty being displeased seemed altogether impossible. I had never seen her anything but smiling and gracious.

Oh, well! . . . I rushed through my dressing at once, jerking and fussing into my clothes, with nervous irritation. At last, ready. There was yet an hour before I should have to go down to dinner. Plenty of time to get a thoroughly good scolding, I thought grimly; then laughed, at the altogether absurd idea of such treatment from the Queen.

In the soft Scottish twilight I hurried along to Her Majesty's private apartments. The high doors of the Queen's sitting-room were closed. The silver handles glittered in the dusk. Dared I knock? I glanced round. There was no one about. Then I waited a few moments and listened. Complete silence within the room. My breath quickened with nervousness.

What *was* I to do? Where on earth was the Queen's footman, that stately but kindly giant, who looked as if he had admitted and dismissed Emperors from his earliest years! Oh, for his experience at this moment! He would know exactly what to do, and it certainly would not be to stand shivering in the corridor.

At that, I gathered up my courage and knocked. After all, I *had* been sent for, and the time was getting on. "Come in," said a clear voice at once. I opened the door and stood upon the threshold. Somehow, the sight of that room and its occupant, as I saw it that evening, will remain with me always. Perhaps because of the reaction from my nervousness, perhaps because of what it preluded, the memory of it remains with me very clearly.

The Queen's sitting-room at Balmoral is very large, with four or five great windows looking towards Invercauld and the now dusky hills. The last faint flush of sunset lingered behind them, and beyond the flat terrace gardens the whole valley of the Dee opened out in lovely curves of wood and moor to the horizon. There was majesty in the sharp drawn purple outlines of the great moorlands against the darkening sky.

This had been Queen Victoria's sitting-room, where she spent many long, happy hours of her holiday in the North. One could imagine it the centre of the family life she loved so well. In here, after tea, in those old days would come trooping the royal children, in their quaint tartan clothes and corkscrew curls, to play in "Mamma's sitting-room" until bedtime. Perhaps one could imagine even the Prince Consort relaxing a little here, and (incredible thought!) playing "Baa-lambs" or "Bears" on the floor.

But to-night there was only one occupant, and the room was very quiet. One little reading lamp only was alight; a little star in the dusk, it stood on a table by a sofa, which faced the windows and the great panorama of the hills.

The Queen was resting on the sofa, not yet dressed for dinner, reading by the light of the little lamp. She looked up as I stood on the threshold, frowning slightly to see who it was, in the dim light. Then she laid down her book. "Come in, Katharine," she said, and I closed the door and advanced.

Her Majesty did not move from the sofa, and I stood by the little table, smiling down at her timidly, for I was still nervous. How fair she looked, I thought, by the searching, down-flung light of the reading lamp. How flawless a complexion; how beautifully her hair was arranged; how *soignée* and perfect every physical detail.

She looked up at me with that half-shy, half-amused look which gives her at times an almost girlish expression. My nervousness vanished. She certainly was not displeased. "You have been a long walk this afternoon?" she asked. The Queen always seems to know exactly what everyone does at the castle. "Yes, ma'am," I said, and gave some details of my direction. "Yes, that is a lovely spot," she commented.

Then, taking up a letter from the little table she glanced through it. "Now for it!" I thought. The Queen looked up. "I have a letter here," she said, "from Princess Patricia of Connaught. It concerns you, and it will be for you to decide how we shall answer it." Her Majesty paused, glancing at the letter again.

I was immensely puzzled by this statement. I knew that Princess Patricia had this summer returned with her parents, the Duke and Duchess of Connaught, to England, and that if the Duchess's health permitted, they were returning to Canada after Prince Arthur of Connaught's wedding in October. The Duke was then Governor-General of the Dominion. But how could this concern me, I wondered! I was not left long in doubt.

"Princess Patricia," continued the Queen, in her low, clear voice, "asks me in this letter if I would consent to lend you to her, Katharine, as a temporary lady-in-waiting, to go with her back to Canada, in October."

I gasped—and the little lamp seemed to double itself. Good Heavens! Here indeed was the longed-for change. But in so unexpected a form, did I want it? For how long would it be? . . . So far away too. . . . Should I like Canada? Many impulsive questions hovered on my lips, but remained unspoken—for one does not bombard Her Majesty with questions. I watched her fair, serene face under the lamplight. She was not looking at me, but glancing through the letter again, but she must subconsciously have felt the confusion of my thoughts, for she continued: "There is no need at all for any immediate decision. You will have to consult your mother, and think it well over." Then she looked up at me again. "Do you think you would like to go, Katharine?"

For a moment I was speechless, for I really did not know what to answer. I knew nothing whatever about Canada, except the rather cheerless facts I had imbibed about it in the schoolroom. These seemed to me altogether lacking in charm. A great deal of snow . . . and skinning . . . in regions where one's fur boa was alive and crawling about . . . and being trapped by strange men in goat-skin trousers. . . . A great many pointed fir-trees . . . and everyone with their ears covered against the frost.

I supposed that there existed some kind of society in the far-spaced towns, where crude colonial parties were given—but from schoolroom memories it seemed to me that where there wasn't snow, there were prairies, and wastes, and loneliness, and everyone doing their own housework, while the men (and not "Mary") called the cattle home. . . . It amused me, sometimes, when I came to know Canada and Canadian society to think how very wide of the mark these ideas of mine had been! But to my ignorance, it did not seem the right background for a very exquisite young Princess, and I had grave doubts, at that moment, whether it would exactly suit me!

And so I hesitated, looking down at the Queen in shy confusion. . . . "It's a great opportunity," I managed at last to stutter. I had always, from earliest childhood, had a passionate desire to see as much of the world as I could, but somehow my longings had not drifted westwards. It was the East that called strongest in my case.

Yes, the Queen agreed, it was always a good thing to see as much of foreign countries as one could, and a chance of this description did not come often. I understood that Princess Patricia's lady-in-waiting was not well enough to go, and Her Majesty expressed her willingness to allow me to take her place for six months, if I wished it.

"Do you think you would be strong enough?" she asked a little doubtfully. I hastily assented, for I was still at the age when one feels acute shame at not being thought equal to anything. "The Duchess will of course take her own doctor and nurse with her," the Queen said. And then she spoke to me of the Duchess's almost miraculous restoration to health, and of the climate in Canada.

Then, glancing at the jewelled clock which stood beneath the lamp on the table, Her Majesty added: "As I say, no immediate decision is necessary, at any rate for a fortnight. Think it well over and consult your people, and then let me know. Now I must dress for dinner." She nodded and smiled. I took her hand and kissed it, a privilege the Queen always accords to members of Her Household, and making a little curtsey, I hurried to the door, closing it softly behind me in the now brilliantly lighted corridor.

It was half-past seven . . . half-an-hour yet before I had to make an appearance in the drawing-room below.

I would go back to my bedroom. I had an urgent desire for solitude. To my dismay, I found this was not immediately obtainable, for my own maid and the housemaid had taken possession of the room. Each was mechanically busy, the housemaid filling the water-jug, my maid tidying and folding, and they were engaged in one of those interminable conversations which is far too mildly referred to among them as "passing a few remarks."

Upon my entrance the animated discussion closed. The housemaid melted away, and my own maid, after an anxious glance at my face, followed her example.

I was alone with the flickering firelight in the bright, cheerful room. Once again I gazed deeply into the blue and red flame-country, where so many dreams are born, so many decisions taken. There was absolute silence—absolute stillness. . . . And in a few moments, like a little, glancing sword cleaving the mist of my uncertainties, there came the conviction that I should go. . . .

CHAPTER XVIII

DEPARTURE FOR CANADA

THE marriage of Prince Arthur of Connaught took place on October 15th, 1913, and two days after, on October 17th, the Connaught family (the Duke and Duchess and Princess Patricia) were due to sail back to Canada, where His Royal Highness's Governor-Generalship had still one more year to run.

They took with them several new members of their suite, one of whom was myself. For three months (perhaps six) I was to act as Lady-in-Waiting to Princess Patricia, her own "lady" having been given much-needed sick leave.

October the seventeenth dawned fine and clear, but sunshine and the clean-swept skies of autumn failed to produce much cheerfulness in our little house. The *Empress of Britain* was due to sail that evening from Liverpool at seven o'clock, with the Connaught family on board. Though to me this was a fine adventure, and I was glad that we had decided that I should go, the actual parting for so long an absence was a very bitter moment indeed. Could I have foreseen that I should not see those I loved or England again until we had plunged into the greatest war Europe has ever known, I really think I should have missed the boat. As it was, I very nearly missed the train, and in the following way.

After many fond and rather tearful farewells, I started to join the royal party at Euston, accompanied by all the younger members of my family, determined to see the last of me. As bad luck, or bad management, would have it, we arrived after the Duke and Duchess and their suite were already on the platform, and for a truly terrible half-hour it looked as if I should never be able to join them. No—said the voice of authority—no one was allowed on the platform, after the royalties had arrived, without a pass or ticket.

I had, of course, none to show, therefore, I could not go on to the platform. It was quite a simple proposition to the official mind, and it produced no visible effect on it when I said who I was, and that I was sailing with Their Royal Highnesses as a member of their suite. That was no concern of the police. They had their instructions, and they meant to abide by them.

The *impasse* became more and more agitating as the time wore on, and we rushed about to the different entrances of that dreary terminus, trying in vain to batter down official opposition. It seemed impossible either to find a way to the reserved platform, or an official important enough to take the risk of over-riding his instructions and letting someone through without a pass. As long as I live I shall never forget the flustered agitation of that hour, running like a rabbit round that unspeakable station.

My maid and luggage were already on the train. What *was* I to do? As an example of the sheer obstinate idiocy of officialdom, the case is, I think, without parallel. At long last my entreaties produced a liaison with someone already on the royal platform. The staff became aware of what was happening; an A.D.C. was hurriedly sent to over-rule the police, and I was escorted to the train, not a moment too soon, as five minutes after I reached it we started.

Our good-byes were mercifully shorn of much of their emotion, for, in the relief of boarding the train, every other feeling was swallowed up. As we pulled slowly out, I leant out of the window and saw my brothers and sister in a row, wistfully watching our departure. I was not to see them again until two months after the outbreak of the European war. But of this, of course, I had not the slightest premonition.

What were my feelings on starting off for a six months' tour with a large party, with not one of whom I had become really acquainted? I had been introduced to the wife of the Military Secretary; I had met one or two of the Duke's aides-de-camp; Princess Patricia I knew very slightly; the Duchess, her mother, not at all.

Well, I was young, confident of my power to be of use, not unversed in the kind of duties that would be mine—it was just a great adventure! Therefore, when (after a surreptitious interval with a handkerchief) I found a tall, kindly person standing by my seat and asking me to come with him into the adjoining car for lunch, I put away the memories of the morning with my handkerchief, and followed him into the dining-saloon, conscious of a far from morbid hunger.

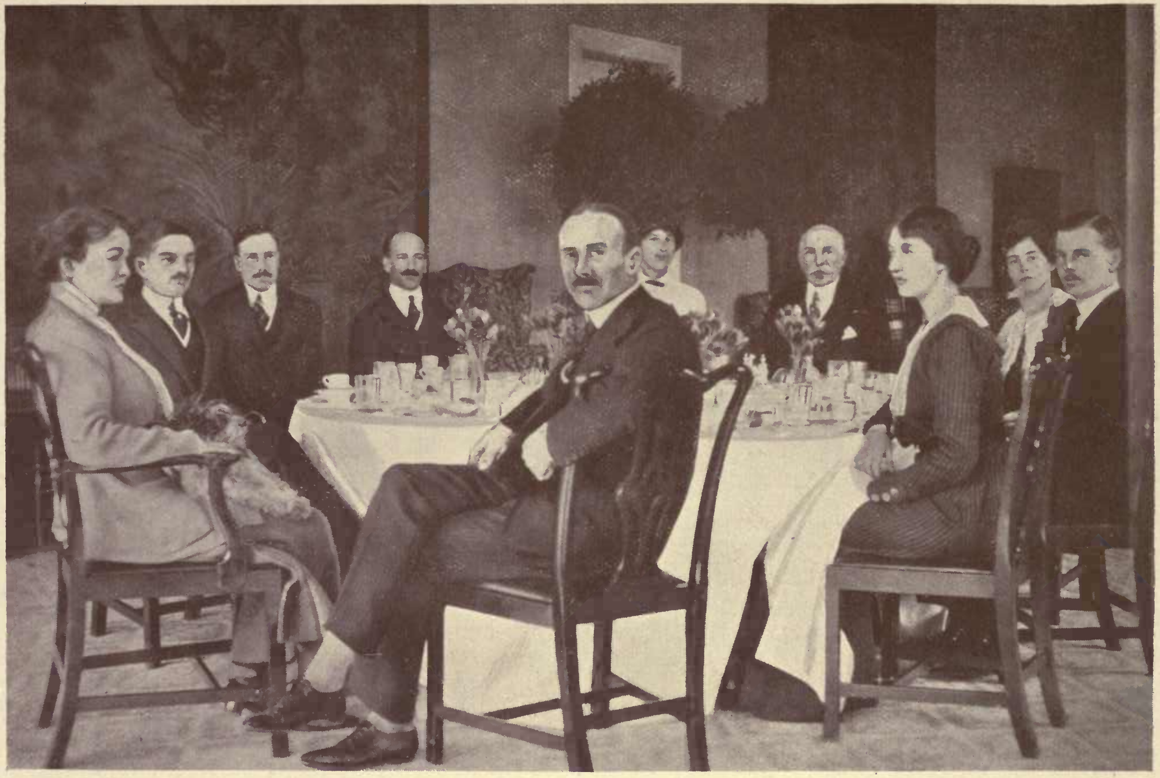
The kindly person was Sir Edward Worthington, the medical officer on the staff. He was very kind indeed, and all that interminable day he took me under his wing, shepherded me on to the boat; sent off my sheaf of sentimental wires to friends and relations, made me known to the rest of the party, and generally did his best to dissipate the "lone lost lamb" feeling of this new addition to the staff.

Of Their Royal Highnesses I had so far seen but little, and that only from a distance. When we boarded the *Empress of Britain* I found that one side of the entire second deck had been reserved and screened off for the members of the royal party. Here the Duchess, in the day-time, had her chair and her meals, for she was still far from strong, having only just recovered from a severe operation. Her bright, devoted little nurse hovered about her all day, anticipating her every need.

We all had delightful staterooms to ourselves. I rather fancy they had been especially decorated and repainted for the occasion. Mine had a little brass bedstead hung with pale blue curtains, and simply masses of cupboards.

Out of the Duchess's stateroom was a little sitting-room, and here eleven people assembled that night before dinner. Eleven of us, who were to grow to know each other so well, who, for the next eight or nine months, were to breakfast, lunch and dine together day after day, with unfailing regularity—sharing the same house, the same meals, the same amusements, the same interests.

Strange now—to look back upon the strangeness of that first night! How little we knew of each other, and of what the future held! The sitting-room was small. We all seemed very close together, eleven of us thrown by a chance eddy of life into the intimate relationship of one family. For a governmental staff becomes in time like the members of one family. They are living together in a



ROYALTY AT HOME.

The usual luncheon party at Government House, Ottawa.

Left to right, in front of table :

H.R.H. DUCHESS OF CONNAUGHT, SIR EDWARD WORTHINGTON, H.R.H. PRINCESS PATRICIA OF CONNAUGHT, CAPTAIN ALAN GRAHAM, MISS K. VILLIERS, H.R.H. DUKE OF CONNAUGHT, MISS DOROTHY YORKE, LIEUT.-COLONEL FRANCIS FARQUHAR, CAPTAIN THE HON. G. BOSCAWEN, LORD SPENCER COMPTON.

strange land, among strange people. It is inevitable that they should cling together and form a kind of clan.

Of the people who assembled in the little lamp-lit room, on the great boat making its way slowly down the Mersey that foggy autumnal night, seven were men, and four of those seven have left their bones in France or Flanders. How merciful, after all, is the veiling of the future. . . . These men, as I saw them that night, shy, friendly, pleasant, well-mannered people, ready to do anything for anyone, eager for the life and new interests ahead of them in the great Dominion—they, to be slaughtered on Flemish fields by an invisible enemy?

How strange it seems that the uncivilised ferocities of that implacable future cast no shadow before . . . and that our ignorance raised so invulnerable a shield. . . .

Princess Patricia and her father, the Duke, joined us after bidding the Duchess good night. Princess Patricia in those days was very charming, with a dignified little restraint of manner all her own. I received an impression of heavy eyelids that fluttered sensitively—of a drooping mouth—of delicate, artistic gestures, and a smooth classic head.

Her lovely eyes seemed never fully unveiled, but were deeply shadowed by the lids. A look of dignity—conscious of itself, yet sweet and sad—so she appeared to me. Of her profoundly artistic spirit, of her delicious shy reserves, of her child-like faith and simplicities, I then knew nothing.

The Duke of Connaught has an easy accomplished manner, a man born, elaborately trained and brought up to be, before all things, a Prince of his house. In every gesture, in the smallest shades of manner this showed itself—the bright, swift glances, the cordial handshake, the trained smile that comprehended us all.

The Military Secretary was Colonel Francis Farquhar, "Fanny" as he was always affectionately called by his impulsive, erratic, and charming Irish wife, Lady Evelyn Farquhar, a sister of the late Lord Donoughmore. She was in those days, an extremely delicate, high-spirited and amusing person; so fragile, one felt she might be blown away by the first puff of wind—yet with the endurance and spirit of ten men! Her wiry strength was equal to anything. She seemed to wear her slim body impatiently, as little more than a white sheath to the ardent, impulsive spirit within. She was the life and soul of our party; the organiser and inspirer of all our best efforts.

For sheer inventive and practical ability I have never known her equal. She could sing and play and dance. She could dressmake, cut out patterns, cover chairs, trim hats. A creature of lightning changes, and quick, warm sympathies, of scintillating vitality and humour. Yet, with all her surface activities she possessed intuition and heart.

A curiously interesting and fascinating person I found her, possessed of a richness, a depth of character, perhaps a little disjointed by her irrepressible and insubordinate Irish blood. For I have known her mordant wit cut straight across her natural sympathies, at times scarring the glittering surface of her deeper intuitions, like a crack on ice. She could tear things down with her sense of humour, whilst understanding them utterly with her heart. I adored her from the first.

My shyness found an anchor in her gay self-assurance, and the delights of her companionship made all the difference to my stay in Canada. The Farquhars had brought out their children with them, two little girls at the bunchy bare-kneed age, accompanied by a rather forbidding-looking " nannie." They would parade up and down the deck with her, in fluffy coats and tasselled caps. To the staff, they were always known as "Bubble and Squeak."

Of the rest of us, Captain Tommie Bulkeley and Captain Buller had been with Their Royal Highnesses before in Canada. Captain Boscawen, Lord Falmouth's brother, was a new-comer, as was Captain Alan Graham, the brother of the clever, charming liberettist and verse-maker, Captain Harry Graham.

The Duchess's Lady-in-Waiting was, like myself, an " understudy," who was taking Mrs. Bulkeley's place as Lady-in-Waiting to the Duchess, and who nowadays is in constant attendance on Princess Mary. Miss Dorothy Yorke and I soon became fast friends. She was a cheerful and high-spirited addition to our party, and remained with the Duchess until the Connaughts finally came home at the end of the Duke's extended term of office.

Finally, Sir Edward Worthington, the tall, kindly M.O. on Their Royal Highnesses' staff, who had taken pity on my dreary " morning face " and escorted me into luncheon on that first day. He soon became affectionately known to us all as " Zambuk." Indefatigable in kindness, and in skill, a born healer, a man of fine abilities, of patience and tact. His devoted care of the Duchess was wonderful to watch, and it was due, in no small measure, to his skill and careful treatment that Her Royal Highness was able once more to resume the normal activities of life.

Here we all were then, assembled together for the first time. The ship was not yet out of the Mersey, and we were plodding along on an even keel. I felt fairly sure of myself as a good sailor. Still, it could not be denied that this voyage was going to be some test—seven days at sea, and in royal circles!

We trooped into the long dining-saloon that night, taking our places at a round table in a quiet corner. The Duke made a charming host, spruce and cheery. He joked and laughed with us all, and seemed in excellent appetite and spirits. I sat on his left, Lady Evelyn on his right. I glanced across at her often, sensing a sympathetic spirit, but too shy to make an advance.

We all sat very straight—made conversation, and crumbled our bread, conscious of the interested stares of the whole saloon. The waiters, white-clad, hurried to and fro in the hot, soup-smelling atmosphere. The band made gallant efforts at the top of the stairs.

I was glad when the meal was over, and I could go out on the decks, sheet-like under the lamps, where the ship lit up the oily, dusky waters, and the foam flowered as white lilies round the prow.

There were long chairs and shadowy corners, and a moon wrapt in wraith-like autumn mist. And far away, thrown like a glittering bracelet across the dark horizon, the last lights of England . . . the last lights I was ever to see of a pre-war England, mellow in a rich and gracious security, teeming with commerce, ringed round with safety and august prestige. . . .

I leant against the side of the ship and gazed at those lights, and the chill of the dying year conveyed no message to my blunted senses of the greater chill of a doomed and dying age.

CHAPTER XIX

ARRIVAL IN CANADA

PORPOISES! *Icebergs!* and like a streak of aquamarine, the coast of Newfoundland across the horizon. Six days at sea, and the voyage was nearly over, and here we were about to land on a new continent. It had certainly been something of an ordeal, for neither weather nor sea had been kind. There had been storms and rain and wind, evenings when the decks were lashed with spray, and an angry sunset lit the stormy restless seas with crimson. Nights of thunderous lashings, as the great ship battled its way across the vast fields of the Atlantic—and early mornings, too, of pale sunshine on waves like blue ink, when it was wonderful to be alive, the salt air whipped the blood, and everyone played games and felt happier.

Lady Evelyn Farquhar and one or two others of the suite disappeared early in the voyage and were no more seen until Newfoundland came up out of an ice-blue horizon. But most of us managed to keep our legs and to exercise them conscientiously on that eternal ritual of a sea-voyage, pacing round the decks. We soon found our splendid isolation a little cramping, and most of us walked the public decks and watched our fellow-passengers asleep and at play.

Their Royal Highnesses were no exception, except, of course, the Duchess, who remained for most of the voyage quietly in her long chair on the private deck, or in her sitting-room when the weather was rough. But the Duke enjoyed going up or down to the other decks, and regularly at sunset would be seen pacing briskly up and down among the passengers with one or other of his A.D.C.'s. Princess Patricia and I did the same, and we would often meet the Duke round corners, and exchange greetings and chaff before continuing on our ways. I soon found one advantage in travelling with royalty, and that was that though everyone displayed a good deal of interest in us, no one attempted those trying familiarities that seem to be sanctioned by sea-travel. No one embarked on long stories of their past lives, or told us the age and number of their children. We were watched with respect and left to ourselves.

I had begun to know Their Royal Highnesses and to be less shy, and I enjoyed my evening tramp with the Princess, who was a remarkably good sailor.

The daily putting back of the clocks, the daily hardening of the outlines of sea and sky, as the atmosphere cleared itself of fogs and damp marked our progress westward. "We are getting terribly far away from dear little fog-bound England," I used to think during the occasional waves of home-sickness from which I suffered. These usually occurred, I found, at twilight when the great wastes turned steel-grey, and the Atlantic stretched like an interminable dreary desert round the ship. I would look from my port-hole and watch the tossings and lashings of the waves to a monotonous and terrifying infinity, and as I watched, the shadow of loneliness would descend like a black bird upon my shoulder, that sadness of the twilight hour, when the senses, fatigued by the racket of the day, droop and dim, and our prospects turn as grey as the implacably grey horizon.

" What am I doing here ? " I thought, " I who love England and my home and friends in an English winter," and I thought of leaden skies racing before an East wind—of mud in English lanes, crisped by the frost, and crackling beneath the feet of ruddy English children—of turnips, piled in tentlike mounds on a blonde stubble—of gulls, like fallen blossom on the plough, of the wraith-like mists, that hang grey veils on gold and brown coppices, where young beech trees stand naked and pole-like in the frost; of the crackle of wet leaves beneath the plodding tread of English labourers, of their red faces full of the cheerful freemasonry of a common discomfort, of the smoke of English villages pearl-grey against an angry sunset and the friendliness of a crude and simple people.

Here was I racing across endless wastes of sea, to a country of hard outlines, and fierce contrasts, where the snow and ice of a ferocious winter froze every vista into pitiless immobility.

Well, we do not choose our opportunities but can only make the best of the ones we get, and my natural optimism would revive, as the lights went up and the ship lit from end to end on the darkening waters. There is hardly any twilight in Canada, I thought, as we trooped into the hot saloon for another dinner, so it is to be hoped that I shan't get the " doldrums " often ! Little did I know then how greatly I should come to love that country that stretches its miles of golden corn, soft prairies and majestic mountains between the two great oceans.

As we neared our ultimate destination, Quebec, and the banks of the Great St. Lawrence river closed about the ship, I became curious about the procedure of our arrival. I had never seen a Governor-General arrive in a Dominion, still less had I ever been a member of his party, and I wondered what exactly would happen when the *Empress of Britain* came to anchor beneath Quebec. The day before she reached it, we stopped to take a pilot on board. He was, I suppose, just an ordinary pilot, but to most of us he seemed like a messenger of the gods, for he brought letters from England for us all, sent by an earlier boat. The next morning we came to anchor at 5 a.m., and peeping from my porthole I saw, for the first time, the great rock of the Citadel of Quebec towering above the river. Canada at last!

By this time we had our instructions; the entire staff were to join their Royal Highnesses in one of the saloons, there to await the arrival of the Canadian Cabinet Ministers and other officials who were coming on board to welcome the returning Governor-General. In a magically steady cabin I dressed with great care for the occasion. "I look like a figure in the Hyde Park Church Parade," I thought. Yet my appearance seemed to me entirely appropriate for a member of a Royal Household. Smart, but not conspicuous—a kind of fashionable nonentity. There had so far been no sign of breakfast. I felt rather wan and shy, and entirely uninterested in Cabinet Ministers at that hour in the morning. However, with gloves in hand, I hurried to join the Royal Party. Their Royal Highnesses were ready, and I remember feeling a thrill of admiration at the sight of the Duchess of Connaught, standing very erect, in a big plumed hat. Her indomitable courage at facing an official reception in her still feeble health seemed marvellous. I did not then know what a remarkable character she was, or what strength of will and purpose she possessed. The Duchess was born a Princess of Prussia, the daughter of Prince Frederick Charles, commonly known as "The Red Prince." From her seventeenth year she had taken her place by the Duke's side as far more than wife, for she was his *alter ego* his help-meet in everything, his adviser, his constant comfort and support. Through all the years of her life she never failed him, where it was within the limits of human possibility to answer any call. Her sense of duty was superb; her affections when once given, constant and unwavering. She stood now by his side in the saloon of the *Empress of Britain* with that curiously gallant smile of hers lighting up the fragility of her face, glinting in the small keen eyes that were so attractive, yet so unlike her daughter's and so typically Russian. She was proud of her Russian blood and used always to tell us that she was a descendant of the great Catherine. In dignity, in *savoir faire*, she was indeed a daughter of Emperors. There was a look of "race" in every inch of her erect figure, it showed in each movement, in the quick gestures of the white and exquisite hands, in the carriage of the head, above all in the walk. Although very slight, her shoulders were square and strong, and her whole figure conveyed a sense of power and inward control. She was never hurried, always calm and purposeful in movement. If anyone ever wished to see Royal and social technique carried to the point of perfection, they had but to watch the Duchess of Connaught's entry into a crowded drawing-room. The inevitable silence that falls like a pall upon the entrance of royalty, that sometimes embarrasses even the most experienced of them, did not in any visible way affect or upset the Duchess or hurry her movements. I have seen her more times than I can remember come into a crowded reception room where everyone at once stopped talking and stared. She would glance round in an imperceptible and leisurely way, make up her mind to whom she wished to speak and no matter where that person was, she would walk straight up to him or her—sometimes across the entire length of the room, and hold out her hand with unhurried charm and with her slight enigmatic smile, full of dignity—head erect—her shoulders very square—her eyes glinting with humour and friendliness. She had no real beauty but a great deal of *chic*, and a charm of manner that was potent yet difficult to define. For the German in her would sometimes show in a kind of *brusquerie*, which was nevertheless gallant and not unattractive, because of her inherent dignity and breeding. But she could be very blunt at times and state her opinions with a good deal of force. These characteristics were apt to be misleading, for she was anything but simple and downright in reality. She was full of subtleties, full of physical magnetism, with all the charm of the high-bred Russian. Above all, she was a personality, someone always to be reckoned with; she struck a very definite note, and all through her life she inspired devotion and invoked service from those about her. *I* never feared her as a great many people did. She was always charming to me and I think grew fond of me, though she would tease me sometimes mercilessly. A great deal of her girlhood was spent with the Empress Frederick of Germany, who liked to have her as a companion and to take her about. The Empress, a brilliantly clever woman herself, could never (if all accounts be true) learn to "suffer fools gladly." She recognised early the intelligence of her young relative, and would take her with her to museums and picture-galleries, developing her mind and talking to her freely. The Duchess never made a secret of her dislike of the present Kaiser. The story goes (I cannot vouch for its truth) that His Imperial Majesty imprisoned the Duchess's brother for months in a fortress because his wife (the Duchess's sister-in-law) had gone on a skating expedition unattended. The poor Princess had the misfortune to fall into the water, and had been pulled ashore and rescued from a horrible and imminent death by a passing workman. To the Kaiser it was an unforgivable sin that a "Princess of Prussia" should have exposed herself to such an affront as that of being manhandled by a member of the proletariat! I can well believe that, if this story was true, the Kaiser's attitude would have provoked the bitterest criticism from the Duchess, who was democratic in her sympathies and entirely free from any form of snobbery.

The war was a terrible blow to her, for though she had entirely identified herself with her husband's country, yet she had many ties with Germany, and relations in the German armies.

But such an extraordinary eventuality was, of course, very far from our thoughts on that bright morning of our arrival at Quebec, as we waited for the Ministers to come aboard.

On the decks, all was now bustle and activity, and a fleet of little launches were already snuffling round the great ship, like a lot of terriers round a bone.

Through the windows of the saloon we could see the flags at the landing-stage, and a crowd already waiting anxiously for the appearance of the Royal Party. At last, along the deck, preceded by the Captain of the *Empress* and by one or two of the A.D.C.'s, came a solemn group of frock-coated gentlemen. I felt sure that this was our party—it was. The doors of the saloon were opened, and with a great deal of bowing and hesitation, the gentlemen filed in. They were headed by a leonine-looking person with a shock of white hair and a strong, arresting face. This was Sir Robert Borden—in those days Mr. Borden, the Canadian Prime Minister, as I afterwards discovered, a wholly charming and sincere personality. The Duke and Duchess and the Princess stepped forward at once with real pleasure in their eyes. Mr. Borden was an old friend and there could be no doubt of the sincerity of his welcome. He grasped the Duchess's frail hand in his great bear's grip, and scrutinised her with sympathetic friendliness. It was in Canada that the symptoms of her Royal Highness's grave malady first manifested themselves, and the sympathy of the whole Canadian people (always warm-hearted), went with her, when she departed for England and medical treatment. They followed every detail of the subsequent illness and severe operation with the greatest anxiety, and were now giving her a warm welcome back through the medium of this grave and friendly statesman. Greetings and presentations by Mr. Borden of his colleagues followed, during which Miss Yorke and I and the A.D.C.'s stood quietly behind

Their Royal Highnesses. Then, in its turn, the staff was presented to the Ministers, addresses of welcome were then read by various official representatives, there was some friendly talk as the Duke and Duchess and Princess took leave of the Captain and the ship's officers, and then, at last, we were at liberty to land.

We came out on deck, the whole crowd of us, and as Their Royal Highnesses, surrounded and preceded by officials and suite, reached the landing-stage, the old guns from the Citadel fired a salute. "Do you like big guns before breakfast?" Miss Yorke asked me, as we proceeded in a kind of procession towards the royal train. I laughed. "I shall like breakfast better, I think," I answered. There were crowds on the platform, but no more speech-making or presentations, for everything had been curtailed as much as possible on account of the Duchess's health.

At last we were off, and as the train pulled out, I glanced up at the great rock of the Citadel standing up stark from the St Lawrence river, which was gleaming like metal in the stronger sunlight of the Western Hemisphere. My first views of Canada, obtained from the windows of the dining-saloon, as we dealt with a very late and much appreciated breakfast, seemed to me extraordinarily flat and uninteresting. A few big granaries, large areas of cultivation where crops had already been harvested, no definite demarcations anywhere, I noticed. After little England cut up into squares by her lovely hedges, this seemed very queer and bald. A hedge, as we know it, is a thing not often seen in Canada, I discovered, where boundaries are in any case so much wider. But how clear the atmosphere was, how sharp-cut every outline! I felt as if, after years of living in mists, I had suddenly emerged into a real daylight at last.

All through that interminable day, we travelled across the vast plains of Quebec and Ontario. But fatigue considerably dimmed one's impressions. I remember very clearly though, one moment after tea, as the light was beginning to fail, and our whole party (or such of it as could find room) assembled in the glass observation car at the back of the train. We sat opposite each other on the long cushioned seats on either side of the car. The single track was running straight as an arrow across vast stretches of land, as monotonously flat as the desert. The black lines of the rails seemed to be going on and on into the angry heart of the sunset. A fierce glow lit the country for miles, everything seemed bathed in the roseate level light. As far as the eye could see on either hand, only one hint of human habitation.

Far away in the immense fields of loneliness one little black "shack" was visible, but this portent of humanity seemed only to emphasise the vast and shattering solitudes. We all fell silent. I gazed along the lonely track into the eye of a fiery sun, already half-hidden behind the molten barrier of a furnace-like horizon. How still and how clear it was!

The racket of our train must carry for miles in these level solitudes, I thought. Perhaps the inhabitants of the little "shack" were glad of it. I knew I should be if I lived here. I caught the Duchess's eye, she smiled at me a small faint smile. What must *her* weariness be? Yet she had still to face the waiting crowds at Ottawa.

There was to be no undue delay at the station I understood; we were to drive out to Government House as quickly as possible. And, at long last, when darkness had already fallen, at six o'clock in the evening, we steamed slowly through the overhead glare of a strange station. There was a red carpet upon which many officials and privileged spectators stood waiting, and behind the barriers a great press of people.

In front of where the train at last drew up was a fleet of cars from Government House, and after the inevitable delay of a few hand-shakings, presentations and bouquets, we hurled our weary selves into these cars, and drove slowly off through the faint hurrahs of the patient crowds.

I had a glimpse of broad cobbled streets, of high grey houses and bright shop-fronts, and then we were speeding along a deserted bit of road which gradually mounted towards Government House. We turned sharply into an avenue, through the mysterious rustle of dark invisible foliage. The cars swept round a semi-circular drive, and drew up finally under a large stone portico. In a few moments I was standing in the hall of what seemed like an English country house. There stretched away a broad corridor with bright chintz-covered sofas, and a red pile carpet. "Why! Why! it's just like England!" I exclaimed.

And this was, at last, Government House, Ottawa.

CHAPTER XX

STAFF LIFE IN CANADA

GOVERNMENT HOUSE, Ottawa, was, indeed rather like a cheery English country home, with its high, white rooms, gay chintzes, and great open fire-places. On the entrance side it possessed an imposing façade and portico, and looked very much a Governor-General's residence, but the rooms on the garden at the back had high French windows, opening on to a straggling verandah, where, in the warm weather, the Staff was apt to idle in rows in the sunshine, drink coffee after lunch, and watch the humming birds darting over the broad herbaceous borders.

English flowers grew here, and it was strange to see these exotic little foreigners hovering with dazzling wings over the familiar blossoms; their bodies, incredibly small and iridescent, were really no bigger than butterflies. At night, in summer, the fire-flies would appear and light minute lamps under the flowers.

But when I first arrived at Ottawa with the Governor-General's party, it was late October. The menace of the great Canadian winter was already visible in a brown and stagnant vegetation, and I had to wait until the following August to see these lovely little strangers. August—and England! How far away they both seemed on those first days after my arrival, when I still suffered occasionally from home-sickness.

But I found that we settled down at once into the kind of easy routine such circumstances engender, and under its soothing monotony I soon threw off all feeling of strangeness. Without quite realising it the various members of the staff were growing each day to know each other better, and a definite stage of familiarity was reached when we found comic nicknames for each other.

I was delighted with the little sitting-room allotted to my use. It had a green door, upon which painted apple blossoms rambled. This, I understood, was the work of Princess Louise, Duchess of Argyll, who was chatelaine here for some years during her husband's Governor-Generalship, and had left many mementoes of her artistic talent about the house.

Here, then, in this little room overlooking the garden, I settled down happily enough. In the mornings I worked at my "job," as I designated the absurdly light secretarial work that fell to my lot as Lady-in-Waiting to Princess Patricia. It was generally a question of accepting this, refusing that, acknowledging or thanking in the name of Her Royal Highness.

I saw the Princess each morning at breakfast, which we had all together in the sunny dining-room, and afterwards she would hand over to me anything she did not wish to answer herself. Then we usually dispersed, the Princess to her own sitting-room on the first floor, Miss Yorke to hers, I to mine, the A.D.C.'s to their various duties, and so the early morning hours would wear quietly away, with all of us (presumably) at work.

But about mid-day the staff would relax a little, and pay each other visits. This was popularly known among us as "coffee-housing." It became quite a regular custom for a "coffee-housing" party to assemble in my sitting-room about 12 o'clock. One or two of the A.D.C.'s would always drop in at that hour to smoke and discuss those absorbing but unimportant topics that usually occupy the minds of people leading the same kind of rather segregated existence.

But after much solemn talk, youth and high spirits would often get the upper hand, and then the little room would become what I used to describe, in quite useless and only half-serious remonstrance, as "a bear-garden"! With two hefty A.D.C.'s engaged in a friendly wrestling match and cuffing each other heartily on one small sofa, the rest of the room (not to speak of the sofa) was apt to suffer. As soon as they were anything but a whirling mass of arms and legs I would escort them severely to the door with an edict of banishment for the rest of the morning.

Princess Patricia spent most mornings in her own sitting-room, a charming, circular room on the first floor. Here she could always be found, generally hard at work at her painting, that very real gift of hers by which, in these later years, she has won for herself so assured and definite a place in the world of artists. Even in those early days the Princess's studies of still life were remarkable for their strength and boldness. She would collect a few Chinese ornaments (these she had a passion for), a tawny autumn branch or two, or perhaps some chrysanthemums in an old vase—arrange them on a faded piece of silver brocade, or on the glistening surface of a mahogany table, and paint them until the whole thing blazed into a symphony of lovely tones. Often, coming round the easel to see what she had been doing, I was startled by the boldness, the assurance and individuality of her work.

This charming royal artist would then stand back, and ask humbly for criticism, when all one felt inclined to give was admiration. Clad in a very workmanlike painter's overall, with cheeks flushed and soft brown hair a little ruffled, she was too delightful and lovely to watch. Far more at home in her painter's blouse than in any ball-dress, far happier at work than at play, I always felt that in these moments one met the real Princess Patricia—a person entirely different from the stately, rather shy Royalty who appeared in public.

Thus, at ease in her own atmosphere, she was the most genuine and charming of people, as enthusiastic as a child, humble about herself and her gifts, affectionate, and intensely appealing. She was, at that time, too, very keen about singing, and possessed a small but charming voice. When Madame Melba stayed with the Duke and Duchess at Government House some years later, in connection with some concerts she was giving for War charities, the great prima donna gave Princess Patricia much encouragement, and some instruction, too.

During the year I was with her in Canada, she worked really hard at her singing, and would often call me in to practise duets with her, much to our mutual satisfaction. "L'heure Exquise" of Reynaldo Hahn was one of our favourites, I remember. There is one particularly high note in that song which we both found difficult to attack.

We would practise various methods of approaching it, but more often than not we broke down utterly, too much out of breath with our expert breathing to produce any sound at all. And the practice would be apt to end in a hopeless fit of giggles.

After I had been about a month at Government House, I went off to stay with my cousins, Lord Clarendon (the present Governor-General of South Africa) and his wife (a sister of Lord Somers, the present Governor of Victoria, Australia). The Clarendons had emigrated with their children to Canada, and had made a charming home for themselves near Toronto, actually putting up a great many of their ranch buildings with their own hands. It was called "Duffin's Valley Farm," and one had to travel all night from Ottawa to get to it.

My visit was an amusing and delightful experience. After the night in the train we stopped the next day about mid-day—apparently in the middle of the prairies. No sign of station, or platform—still less of a porter—just Lord Clarendon waiting in a wagon, or "rig" as it was called. When he saw me he jumped down, and he and my maid together pulled out my box, which he himself proceeded to hoist into the wagon. My maid's face was a picture as he pulled her up after it, and settled her on a packing-case. I sat beside him on the driving seat.

He whipped up a great fat thing like a cart-horse, and we started. I found that one had to hold on for dear life, as the road was non-existent—a mere bullock track, full of great pot-holes and deep ruts. I looked back and saw my maid embracing the box with both arms. It was quite a long drive. On arrival at the farm I found it charming. They both took me round and showed me everything with great pride, and I was especially asked to admire the pigsties, every board of which Lord Clarendon had erected and painted himself.

The two sturdy little children were running quite wild, and looked so healthy and happy. In the orchard we came upon Lord Somers, or rather the lower part of him, for his head and shoulders were entirely hidden in the thick foliage of an apple tree. Presently he came down a few rungs of the ladder to talk to us. He was collarless, tieless, with bare arms, and as brown as a berry. He could not stop long to talk to us as he was busy collecting the fruit, and it was not yet time for him to knock off work. We saw him again at half-past six, when we all had "high tea."

The two great Pro-Consuls of the future sat down, collarless, with bare arms, and consumed chops and weak tea with great relish. They had been up and at work since six in the morning. Lord Somers sang and played a little after the meal, but by nine o'clock they were both half asleep, and stumbling up to bed.

I had a delightful little bedroom with a blue and white curtained bed, and here I fell asleep in the great stillness of the prairies.

It had been arranged that I should bring the whole party back with me to Government House. Most of the next day was spent by my hosts in making themselves tidy for the Ottawa visit. We were not to start till the evening, and should travel all night. After more chops and tea the wagon came round for us, this time driven by one of the farm hands. Lord and Lady Clarendon, Lord Somers, my maid and I, and our luggage, all piled into it.

Under a fantastic moon that turned the prairie into a great silver desert we started, jolting and heaving along the rutty track. But as there were more of us this time the cart was steadier, and one did not get so bumped and somehow managed to stick to one's own packing-case seat. We caught the night train on the prairie for Toronto, and arrived at Ottawa next morning. By that time both the men looked so very civilised again, with their sleekly brushed hair and well-cut clothes, that I could hardly believe I had ever seen them without collars. . . .

As the weeks wore on and the winter really set in, as the roads became impassable for wheel traffic, and the sleighs appeared with their heavy black furs and tinkling bells, and the fir trees held the snow like blossom on their branches, and the skating-rinks in the Government House grounds froze to an even, blue-green expanse, I began slowly to realise the charm of a Canadian winter.

Intense though the cold is, one never suffers from it as one does in England. I can remember now the feeling of physical exhilaration when, after hard exercise in the snow, one came back to the great house heated to an even temperature throughout, and casting off jersey, short skirt and woolly cap that covered the ears, slipped thankfully into some flimsy garment that one could wear in June in England.

When there were afternoon parties at Government House we always wore quite comfortably the kind of dresses suitable for Ascot at home. A sensible and pleasant way of living, I thought it.

I suppose in England, midway between the two extremes of heat and cold, neither one thing nor the other, it is more difficult to adapt oneself sensibly to the erratic whims of an indefinite climate. But I do think that English people live as if they were always preparing for and expecting far better climatic conditions than they ever get, and are surprised and aggrieved at the discomforts they inevitably suffer.

Tea-time at Government House is associated in my mind with a sense of physical well-being, with roaring fires, tired relaxed muscles, chiffons, and Princess Patricia pouring out tea. In those early days the Duchess kept much to her own rooms and did not appear in the evenings at all. The Princess made a gracious substitute.

Sometimes we had no time to change, but tramped in in our skating things. The Princess, when not in a woolly cap, wore a little round felt hat, rather back from her face, that showed a good deal of her pretty wavy hair. By Christmas we were all busy skating or learning to skate from the professional who came two or three times a week to give us instruction. Close to the rink was a little wooden house, built like a Canadian shack, almost on the ice, and here a good stove would always be kept burning for those who felt that their extremities were in danger of falling off.

Wonderful afternoons I have spent there. On the farther bank the fir trees grew thickly to the very edge, casting a mysterious dark shadow on the green ice. We would skim through this into the brilliant sunshine beyond. Some good skaters would be asked to come up for the afternoon, and there would be merry parties waltzing and figure-skating in the brilliant sunshine, with a big tea-party at Government House afterwards.

In the evenings, once or twice a week, there were official receptions in the long blue saloon, when everyone was very solemn and stately, and the Duke and Princess went the whole round of the room, shaking hands with everybody. Gradually the Duchess grew stronger, and made more frequent appearances, and it was an occasion for general rejoicing when she attended her first official reception. Sir Edward Worthington, the genial M.O., watching Her Royal Highness like a lynx in the background, was never far away that evening, and would surreptitiously move forward a chair, or (when he could) cut short a conversation that threatened to be fatiguing.

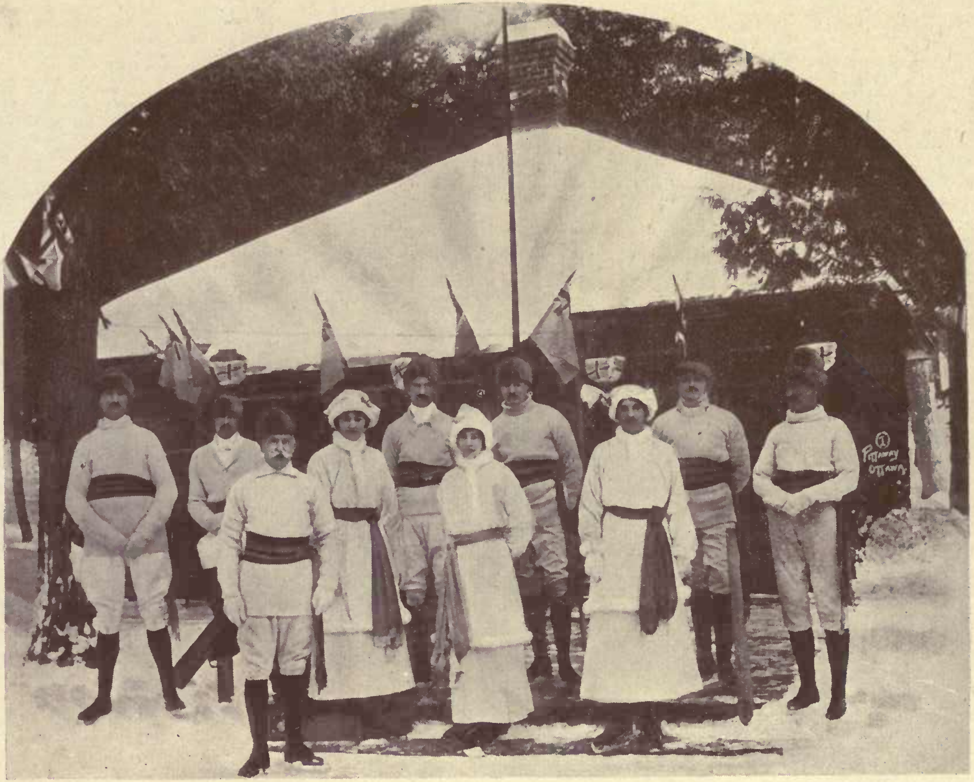
Later on, the Duchess came down to the rinks, and from an easy-chair near the stove watched us all, and encouraged our efforts, and at last she was able to put on skates herself and go slowly round on the arm of the professional. Sometimes this saturnine-looking expert would give us exhibitions of what he could really do, and from an Hebraic-looking person he would turn into some lovely bird, skimming the ice at incredible speeds, jumping, waltzing, whirling, racing, bent double, turning on the proverbial sixpence. One's own little efforts seemed a futile waste of time after such expert brilliance.

Midway through the winter Their Royal Highnesses decided to give a fancy-dress evening party on the skating rink. There were several friends from Montreal and New York staying in the house at the time, among them Mrs. Dana Gibson, a sister of Lady Astor, and wife of the artist and draughtsman, whose delightful "Gibson Girl" everyone will remember. Many people, and all the good skaters in Ottawa society were also asked. It promised to be a most successful affair.

It was decided that the Duke, the Princess, and the Government House staff should give an exhibition dance of the Lancers on the ice. We were all fairly proficient skaters by then (Princess Patricia was extremely good), and we felt confident we could get through the not too complicated figures. We decided to dress alike: the ladies were to wear white velvet, fur-edged skating tunics, and very short white pleated skirts, with white velvet caps to match, ornamented by a rakish bunch of berries over one ear; the men, white sweaters, white riding-breeches and white woolly caps. To mark our movements in the darkness we were each of us to carry a flaming torch. It promised to be very effective indeed.

The night of the party was brilliantly fine, not a breath of wind even flickered the torches. Half-way through the evening, the Minto rink was cleared of skaters, and the Government House party glided out in a white throng on to a shining surface of illuminated ice. It was like some fantastic dream of fairyland—this circling round, this retreating and advancing, this waltzing and chassé-ing in the glare of the torches. We acquitted ourselves well, I think, and skated back to the smiling Duchess in the little "shack" amid the applause of the appreciative audience in motley.

How wonderful it then was to watch the shimmer of fancy-dresses, of tinsel and spangles and furs and lace, as



THE ICE PARTY.

" We decided to dress alike, the ladies in white velvet, fur-edged skating tunics and very short pleated skirts, with white velvet caps to match, ornamented by a rakish bunch of berries over one ear. The men, white sweaters, white riding breeches and white woolly caps."

black

In the front row, from left to right :

H.R.H. THE DUKE OF CONNAUGHT, H.R.H. PRINCESS PATRICIA, MISS K. VILLIERS, AND MISS D. YORKE.

the crowd took the ice again to a rollicking waltz. All night they danced to a string band among the fir trees, and long after dawn the Chinese lanterns that outlined the rink and patterned the ice in fantastic shades still flickered bravely like tired but indomitable revellers.

The Government House party could not stay till the end, and hours after, leaning from my window in a rosy sunrise, I could still see the kaleidoscopic colours of this outdoor ballroom flashing through the trees. The Duke and Duchess gave one or two indoor balls that winter, and there was an immense children's party and tree at Christmas.

And then, gradually, the great winter snows gave way a little before the increasing warmth, and spring appeared in Ottawa, heralded by a sea of mud and slush on the roads, by blizzards and melting ice. By the end of March nearly all traces of snow had disappeared and shy little spring flowers were making their appearance in the gardens.

Easter came early that year, and with it a visit from Miss Ruth Draper, the now famous American *diseuse*. I had known Miss Draper from schoolroom days, and it was at my suggestion that the Duchess most kindly asked her to spend a few days at Government House. She gave us two performances of her incomparable monologues, a quite private one for the Duke and Duchess, and then another for a few friends from Ottawa, who were asked for the occasion. Needless to say, she was a tearing success.

When she left us, I was given a week's leave of absence, in order to accompany her back to New York, which I had never seen. I had a hectic time there, for besides many social activities, I had been commissioned by both the

Duchess and the Princess to bring them back some new spring clothes! What with shopping, visits to a ferocious dentist, lunches and dinners and dances, my six days went in a flash.

I managed to fit in some sight-seeing, and climbed to the top of the Woolworth Building, which was then the tallest sky-scraper in New York. It has, I think, about fifty floors, forty of which I was shot up in about two minutes by means of a hydraulic lift. One felt like a bullet being fired from a rifle! On this fortieth floor I was allowed to pause, and from a dizzy balcony I looked down on the streets, no bigger than narrow "baby ribbons," and the busy motors like heaps of nasty little ants. I distinctly felt the sway of the great building under me. At the fifty-fifth floor, I believe (but really by that time I had lost exact count) there was such a high wind that it was impossible to look out at all without having hat and hair almost torn off one's head.

During my visit I saw a great deal of the late Mrs. Benjamin Guinness, who had a charming house. Here I met her talented children, who were then fascinating little slips of things in the schoolroom. They used, as they said, to "dance Pavlova" for me. There was a craze for this great Russian dancer in New York that year. Mrs. Benjamin Guinness and her husband had stayed at Government House during the winter and taken an active part in our skating parties.

Another friend of Their Royal Highnesses, Mrs. Dana Gibson, was also very kind to me. Altogether I had a delightful time. But my indefatigable hostess, Miss Draper, at the last minute had qualms of conscience that I had not seen or done enough, and an hour before my train started for Ottawa, begged me to come out in a row-boat with her to see the Statue of Liberty and the sky-scrapers from the sea. This I firmly refused to do and stuck to my trunks.

On my return to Government House, I found that our whole party was to leave almost at once for a week in Montreal, where the late Lord Strathcona had placed his house and servants at the disposal of Their Royal Highnesses. Here we had a week of functions and parties, and I was thoroughly glad to return again to the comparative quiet of Government House after so hectic a fortnight.

In May a tour of Western Ontario was arranged for the Duke and the Princess. I was to accompany them. The day before we started a cable came announcing the death of the Duke of Argyll, husband of Princess Louise and His Royal Highness's brother-in-law. Consternation of the Staff! Was the tour to proceed or not? Agitation among the ladies. Had they sufficient mourning clothes?

The fate of the tour was settled after tea, when the Duke received a personal wire from the King, saying that the tour was to proceed as per plan. We, therefore, left the next morning in a special train, upon which we lived for ten days. It was a queer experience, stopping at strange towns for addresses and receptions, sometimes driving round in open cars. I generally found myself in the second car with a very fat Mayoress.

After a tour of the town, we returned to the train, which moved on to the next place, where much the same thing happened. One seemed always to be dressing in a very small space, oppressed with a nervous consciousness that the train was slowing down again, and that one would be drawing up opposite the Reception Committee and the local band, in one's cami-knickers. I am thankful to say this never happened, but the nervous dread of it obsessed me. Sometimes the train would be drawn into a siding for the night, and was not allowed to move again until the Duke was shaved.

We visited in their turn, Windsor, Ont., Chatham, St. Thomas, Sarnia, Woodstock, Stratford, Berlin, Galt, Brentford, Niagara, St. Catherine's, and Hamilton.

At Windsor we were badly mobbed. As the Duke was planting a tree in the City Park, the crowd broke through the cordon of local Boy Scouts, and we were completely cut off from the exit. I was very nearly suffocated by an enormous negress, in a pink cotton dress, whose loyalty was more exuberant than discriminating, and who apparently wished to trample me underfoot in order to get at the Princess.

At St. Thomas the Duke laid the foundation stone of a Y.M.C.A. building, and there was much praying on scaffolding.

At Sarnia, after endless receptions and addresses, we had to hurry back to the train in order to change into motoring clothes (in those days quite a business of tying chiffon veils round hats like pancakes), and then go crashing into the country, with Mayor and Councillors following in a fleet of cars. I never quite made out what they wanted the Duke to see, for the country seemed exceptionally flat and uninteresting, and the Councillors' cars covered us with dust.

Niagara was a wonderful experience. Here we did the Gorge trip and got an awe-inspiring view of the Rapids. After lunch on the train we visited the Falls.

St. Catherine's provided a mounted escort and old-fashioned barouches instead of motors. The coachman of my carriage wore tweeds and a black top-hat. In these old-fashioned conveyances we drove with great dignity round the local park. A magnificent bouquet was presented to the Princess by two frightened little imps, who repeated together some interminable verses composed by a local loyalist. The epic began, " These d-u-licate buds " . . .

By that time my sense of humour, a little exaggerated perhaps by fatigue, was becoming inconveniently active and had to be sternly suffocated for the rest of the trip.

At Hamilton there were factories to be inspected, and that concluded the tour.

At the end of May Their Royal Highnesses moved to Toronto, a pleasant city of trees, and here a great deal of racing was done in very hot weather, the Duke and Duchess driving with a mounted escort up the course, as Their Majesties do at Ascot. I won quite a lot of money on the Connaught Cup Race !

June saw us at Quebec, installed at the Citadel, with a vast view of the mouth of the St. Lawrence just beneath our windows. Here there were many Catholic priests to be entertained, charming old gentlemen, most of them, in black *soutanes*. Our visit was a little overshadowed by a terrible sea tragedy. One of the *Empress* passenger boats from England collided with a merchant vessel in a fog outside the mouth of the St. Lawrence, and sank with an appalling loss of life. A Committee of Inquiry was immediately appointed to sit at Quebec, with the late Lord Mersey as Chairman.

We saw quite a lot of this famous old advocate and judge, and of the legal luminaries connected with the Inquiry. Lord Mersey attended a dance on the guard-ship *Essex*. I remember him so well, lying comfortably back in a basket chair on deck, his humorous old face twitching with amusement at the antics of the midshipmen and their partners.

Later he stayed with the Duke and Duchess at Ottawa. One night we acted charades after dinner. Lord Mersey insisted on borrowing a white garden hat of mine, in which he gave us a quite inimitable study of a militant suffragette.

Curiously enough, of all the days we spent at the Citadel, June 29th stands out very clearly in my memory. It was terribly dark and dreary, and rain poured ceaselessly all day.

In the afternoon I went with Their Royal Highnesses to the Ursuline Convent where Montcalm died. They showed us his skull. The Convent was of grey stone, a mournful building, I thought. We came out into dark streets, teeming with torrential rain. And on our way back we heard of the murders at Sarajevo. . . .

CHAPTER XXI

WAR AND RETURN

RUSH!—Rush!—Rush!—Rush!—Rush!—Rush! Captain Buller's usually cheery, good-natured countenance was darkened by a heavy frown, as he gazed down at the yellow cable he held in his hand. "What is it?" I asked, from the lazy depths of a basket chair. The broad terrace where we were having tea faced a vast panorama of giant mountains, of fir-trees, black against the snow, of a mountain river, curving like the exquisite folds of a sea-green ribbon.

All round us, the Rocky Mountains flung up their great barriers fiercely, with the effect of some superb ultimatum, against an ice-blue sky. Along their giant slopes, the pointed fir trees huddled closely in black battalions, only to be utterly vanquished and obliterated by the dazzling snow of the fantastic summits. Even scrub faded out at such altitudes, and the giant crags, discarding all vegetation, soared, bald and implacable, against the sky.

It was the evening of 31st July, 1914.—"What is it?" I asked again of my silent and preoccupied companion. Captain Buller looked up. "Look at that," he said, handing me the envelope of the cable he held. "I must decode it at once; that is the third that has arrived for the Duke this afternoon." I looked down at the yellow piece of paper he put into my hand, with its urgent recommendation for haste printed in black block letters at the top, and a curious little chill ran down my spine. I leant back and looked up at the mountains as Captain Buller hurried away.

Two days ago we had arrived at Banff, this lovely spot on the edge of the Rockies. We had reached it after four solid days of travel in exhausting heat and indescribable dirt, across the vast prairies of Central Canada, suffocating under a July sun. There had been various official breaks in the monotony of that journey. We had visited the Oil Wells at Calgary, attended a regatta at Kenora; there had been addresses and presentations at Port Arthur and Fort William, and now we had halted for a week at Banff, the gateway of the Rockies, on our way to Victoria and Vancouver, and an extended tour of the west coast which had been arranged for the Governor-General.

This cool, fresh mountain air and the bathes we had already enjoyed in the hot sulphur pools had considerably revived us. Our party had been augmented that morning by the arrival of Lady Norah Brassey, a sister of Lady Evelyn Farquhar, accompanied by her tall soldier-husband, Captain Brassey. They were to proceed with us to the west coast. We were all much looking forward to continuing our journey, which would be, for the most part, through mountains and along the beautiful shores of Lake Louise. Yes, it would all be intensely interesting, I thought—and yet—and yet—again that queer little chill of excitement (or was it horror?) ran down my spine.

Two days ago the Military Secretary, Colonel Farquhar, had left unaccountably for Ottawa, travelling back all those thousands of miles, post-haste for the capital.

We knew, of course, that the political situation was very tense, but surely it was only those wretched Balkans that could be affected!

Captain Buller came back, hurrying along the terrace, with sheets of paper in his hand. "I must find the Duke at once," he said.

"My dear man," I protested, "the whole party will be back in an hour—why such frantic haste?" The Duke and Duchess had gone on a whole day's fishing expedition with guides and some of the Staff, somewhere miles away along the river. They had been away hours, but we confidently expected them back for dinner, though with fishermen this was, I knew, optimistic.

My companion looked graver than I had ever seen him. "I can't wait—I must get this to him at once."

"As bad as all that?"

"Pretty serious, I'm afraid. . . ."

The royal fishing party returned, as they had promised, for dinner. There was a curious feeling of constraint all through that meal. Everyone knew by then that something serious had happened, but no one, except Their Royal Highnesses and one or two of the staff, knew what it was.

With common accord we dispersed after dinner, all of us curiously disinclined for our usual hour of talk and chaff. I went up to my bedroom to fetch a letter I wished to answer. It was brightly lit up, and looked as if it had suffered the visitation of a party of brigands. Everything was in confusion, things tumbled out of the drawers in heaps—and in the midst, my maid, on her knees, packing for dear life.

I was temporarily bereft of speech, and in that moment Princess Patricia came through the door at my back; her eyes were suspiciously bright, as if she were beating back tears with her lashes. " We have got to leave for Ottawa to-morrow morning at eleven, Katharine," she said, " the tour has been given up."

Back, back, thundering along the way we had just come, across the thousands of miles in the dust and the heat, travelling day and night in an almost terrifying monotony. Hardly any stops were made, except to water the engine of the Duke's special train and to take on more coal. We endured it as best we could, visiting each other in our several compartments, meeting for meals in the long saloon carriage, playing a little bridge after dinner with the Duke. Captain Alan Graham, always a resourceful person, produced a guitar and sang little songs, drowned at intervals by the eternal and monotonous racket of our passage.

The second day Winnipeg was reached, and there we were met by still more serious news of the European crisis. On again we pounded through the level, solitary plains, blazing in an almost intolerable sunshine—through nights when it was impossible to sleep, and days when it was impossible to keep awake on account of the heat. Our speed was so great that smuts from the engine covered everything in sooty layers. Our very faces became begrimed, and we got through a great deal of time washing and tidying, and trying to preserve some semblance of a decent appearance.

At long last, after three and a half days, at six o'clock in the morning, Ottawa ! It was much cooler, and it was little short of heaven, after the trials of the other places we had been through, to reach the great white house, and one's own clean bathroom.

It was hours before I took interest in anything again but water and soap. When I once more, so to speak, came to the surface and inquired what had happened, I was told that the Duke had held an immediate Cabinet Council (poor Duke, I thought! didn't Mr. Borden even give him time to wash?), that the news was very bad, and that no one knew what was going to happen.

I went away into the gardens by myself, and wrote up my diary and sat and thought. The day wore on interminably, no one seemed about, the great house was very quiet. In the afternoon, Princess Patricia and I took our books and a tea-basket up to Rockcliffe, a beauty spot of many trees not far from Government House grounds. On our return there was news of a sort. Captain Buller and Captain Boscawen (the "Teta" and "Bos" of so many happy months) were leaving by the first boat for England, to rejoin their regiments. Captain Alan Graham was feverishly anxious to go with them. He said that if there was going to be a "scrap," he would be too late and miss the whole thing if he didn't leave too, by the next boat, and what was the use of being in the army if, etc., etc. But his plea was refused, as it was impossible to leave the Duke with no A.D.C. at all, and he was told he must wait.

These decisions, small as they were compared to the great issues with which we were all so soon to be faced, created, nevertheless, a feeling of sadness and constraint among us. We felt it as the sudden end of a happy time, a disruption, utterly unforeseen, of our pleasant, intimate relationships; our thoughts left forever our happy plans, and centred round our friends and relations at home. A passionate desire to return to England possessed me. Who could know what might happen? Could the Germans march into London? Could they land at all? Should we be starved out? Questions that every English man and woman were asking during that first long day of the War, and that were answered only in the blood and tears of the future.

Dinner that night at Government House was a silent, preoccupied meal. The Duke looked worn out and very anxious. He had spent all day with his Ministers. The Duchess was silent, too, and our thoughts centred round her in anxious anticipation. If the worst came to the worst and it *was* war, what *would* she feel, she, a German-born. She sat very quiet, glancing now and again at her husband.

Half-way through dinner, the old butler bent solicitously over Captain Buller's plate, murmuring some message.

Captain Buller half rose. "Message coming through from England, sir; may I go?" The Duke nodded. An almost terrifying suspense settled upon the party after he had left the room. No one spoke. The service continued. In about five minutes, the door opened and he returned. He held a slip of paper in his hand. Without a word he laid it by the Duke's plate. His Royal Highness adjusted his pince-nez and took it up. He studied it for a moment in a dead silence, then he looked across at the Duchess and cleared his throat.

"War has broken out with Germany," he announced.

After that, everyone seemed to leave us, and the party at Government House grew smaller and smaller. Lady Norah

Brassey and her husband left by the same boat as Captain Boscawen. It had been arranged that Captain Buller should for the present remain.

The Regiment known as "The Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry" (the immortal P.P.C.L.I.) was formed and recruited by Mr. Hamilton Gault, a resident of Montreal. Colonel Farquhar, until then the Duke's Military Secretary, was offered and accepted the command. We watched these men in all the stages of their recruitment, and I can remember them in the early days marching past the Duke before Government House, with walking sticks instead of rifles on their shoulders. The Princess inspected them, embroidered their flag for them, and went herself with us all to see them off to the Front, with Major (as he then became) Hamilton Gault as second-in-command and Captain Buller as adjutant.

Later on, when Colonel Farquhar was killed, Captain Buller took command, and in turn fell fighting at the head of his men in the Ypres Salient. Captain Boscawen was killed later, as also was Captain Brassey, and his widow, Lady Norah, married some years later Captain Alan Graham. The latter, although months in the trenches, escaped the general holocaust. As the summer wore on, and the casualty lists became part of our daily fare, I longed increasingly to go home.

There was no more travelling. We were immovably fixed at Ottawa. The summer dragged on its dreary, monotonous length, and then at last, in September, came the longed-for summons from her Majesty the Queen to return.

With many regrets, and yet with infinite relief, I left Canada by the next boat, arriving on the 16th October in drenching rain in a khaki England, which, in spite of all its war discomforts, was after all home.

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